











LECTURES  
ON  
CHURCH GOVERNMENT  
CONTAINING  
OBJECTIONS TO THE EPISCOPAL SCHEME.

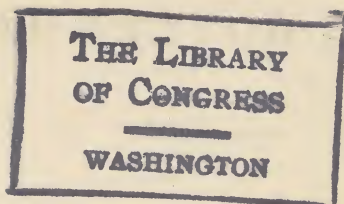
DELIVERED IN  
THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, ANDOVER,  
AUGUST, MDCCCXLIII.

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NEW YORK:  
PUBLISHED BY TURNER & HAYDEN,  
FEBRUARY,  
1844.

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BX5936  
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Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1844, by  
WILLIAM B. HAYDEN,  
in the Clerk's Office of the Southern District of New York.

ANDOVER:  
ALLEN, MORRILL AND WARDWELL,  
Printers.

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TO THE PRESENT MEMBERS AND ALL FORMER MEMBERS  
OF THIS SEMINARY;

My beloved brethren ;

The following Lectures, which are published in compliance with the request of those who heard them, I take the liberty to dedicate to you, in token of my esteem and affection for you, and my earnest desire that you may all enjoy the gracious presence and blessing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Yours in sincere brotherly love,

LEONARD WOODS.

*Theological Seminary, }*  
*Andover, Feb. 1844. }*



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### ERRATUM.

Page 121, line 6 and 7 from bottom—erase the words—"who have the lesson in the Prayer Book right before them."



# CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

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## LECTURE I.

THE FOUNDERS of this Seminary, and the subsequent Founders of Professorships in the Seminary, were descendants of the Puritans, and were all Congregationalists. But they had no sectarian zeal, and no bigotry. On the contrary, they were men of uncommon enlargement of mind, and true liberality of feeling. Accordingly they directed, that the Seminary should be open to *all Protestants*, who should possess the requisite literary and moral qualifications. It has been open, and equally open to all such, and has granted not only its general privileges, but the benefits of its charity-funds, to young men of eight different denominations of evangelical Christians. And as to the Professors, it was only required that they should be *Congregationalists*, or *Presbyterians*. Of the twelve men who have been officers in this Institution, two have been Presbyterians, and ten Congregationalists. Of these ten, five, perhaps, have been Congregationalists of what I may call the Massachusetts order, and five of the Connecticut order, that is, favorable to Consociations. In the choice of Professors, neither Founders, nor Trustees, nor Visitors have ever made any distinction between Congregationalists and Presbyterians.

It is well known to you, my young brethren, as well as to my Colleagues in office, that I have heretofore stood aloof from the controversies of the day respecting the forms of Church Government. Indeed my reluctance to take any part in these controversies has been so strong, and has produced such an effect upon my course of instruction in this Seminary, as to occasion a suspicion, that I really sided in opinion with other denominations, particularly with Episcopalians. A wish to remove misapprehension on this subject, and to make known to you the real convictions of my own mind, is one of the motives which influence me to undertake the work on which I now enter. But my chief motive is, a deliberate and full persuasion, that God requires this service of me, and that I may, in this way, do something to advance the welfare of his kingdom. With this persuasion, I now commence the work; intending to cast off all restraint, and to speak out the honest sentiments of my heart. And, in truth, why should I not do so on this subject, as well as on any other; especially as this is one of the subjects expressly assigned to me by the Founders of the Seminary? Instead therefore of making any apology for bringing it before you more prominently at this time, I ought rather to confess it as a fault, that I have neglected it so long.

/ In the treatment of this subject, I shall do as I am accustomed to do in the treatment of all other subjects. Here in my own Lecture Room, while addressing my beloved pupils on a subject belonging to my own department, I shall use perfect freedom. So far as I have settled opinions respecting Church Government, you may expect me to utter them with great plainness,

though it must be with brevity. I shall say, not all that I could say, but as much as the comparative importance of the subject seems to require, and as much as a suitable attention to other subjects in theology will permit. And in all that I say relative to Prelacy, I shall endeavour to observe the divine precept which I have so often inculcated upon you, to *speake the truth in love*. At the same time, I shall use great frankness, both in defending my own opinions, and in pointing out what I conceive to be erroneous in the opinions of others. But I hope, through the grace of Christ, to be preserved from whatever would violate the laws of candor, or brotherly kindness. Protestant Episcopalians hold to the Protestant principle, that in regard to every subject, it is the right and duty of Christians to examine and judge for themselves, and, on all proper occasions, to state the reasons which satisfy them of the soundness of their own faith, and of the mistakes of those who differ from them. And I trust, that those who claim and exercise this right, will not complain of me for doing the same. In these Lectures I shall exercise this right freely, without respect of persons. The word of God I hold to be our only guide, the infallible and sufficient rule of our faith and practice. Whatever truth is taught in the Scriptures, either expressly, or by plain implication, is clothed with divine authority, and we are to receive it with an implicit, confident faith. All that comes from God is to be treated with reverence and submission. We are not to call it in question. If God is the *Teacher*, we are to be *learners*. When HE speaks, we are to hear, believe, and obey. But there is nothing of *human* origin, which is too high or sacred to be called

in question. And there is no *error*, however sanctioned by antiquity, however extensively prevalent, and however skilfully interwoven with weighty truths, which may not be fearlessly attacked, nay, which ought not to be openly rejected. The honor of God and the welfare of man are most effectually promoted, by truth without any mixture of error. The *word of God*, which is the fountain of divine truth, is perfect, and admits of no addition or improvement. But the minds of men, even the wisest and best, may be improved. Their habits of thinking and reasoning may be made more conformable to the truth, and their knowledge of divine things indefinitely increased.

In order to do justice to my own views respecting Church Government, and to bring the subject advantageously before the members of this Seminary, I shall make a few preliminary remarks.

My first remark is, that *the whole number of true believers on earth, taken together, form one society, one body, the spiritual church or kingdom of Christ*. All believers, all real Christians stand in the same relation to Christ. They are all his disciples and followers. He is equally their Saviour and King. They are subject to the same supreme authority, and the same holy laws. They are all engaged in the same spiritual work, and are actuated by the same spiritual affection. They are interested in the same precious promises, and entitled to the same eternal inheritance. And they will all at last be united together in the same pure and blessed society in heaven. They also stand in substantially the same relation to one another. How much soever divided in regard to outward forms, and how much soever they



may, for the present, be wanting in personal esteem and love towards each other; still, being equally under the government of Christ, they are really *fellow-citizens*. Being children of the same Father, they are all *brethren*. God regards them in this light; and his judgment is truth. *They are all children of God, and all brethren*. Though they may sometimes overlook it, they are, in reality, members of the same body, and as such have a common interest. And whatever promotes the spiritual good of one, really promotes the good of all. And whatever injures any one member of that spiritual body, really injures all.

This being the case, the duty of Christians towards one another is obvious. They ought to feel and act in conformity with the truth. Being really members of one body, they ought to exercise mutual sympathy, care and kindness. Being truly brethren, children of the same Father, they ought to have sincere mutual affection, to "love as brethren," and to take pleasure in each other's welfare. If any member of Christ's spiritual body is weak, or diseased, or defiled, it is no reason why the other members should not acknowledge it as a fellow member; though it is a reason why they should sympathize with it, and endeavour to strengthen, or heal, or cleanse it. Now if Christians, disciples of Jesus, living in the same place, or in different places, do, in open practice, or in heart, separate themselves from one another; if in any way they injure one another; if, on account of any differences in opinion, or in outward forms, real Christians neglect to love one another, or to do good to one another; they violate the obligations which arise from their unchangeable relations to each

other, and to their common Head. They sin against truth. They sin against God, who acknowledges and loves all believers, as his children, and commands them to love one another. They sin against Christ, who died for those Christians whom they disown or neglect, as much as for themselves, and who requires them, as they love HIM, to love his disciples. They sin against their fellow Christians, to whom they owe unceasing affection and fidelity. They sin against themselves; as they owe it to their own souls to cherish the happy feeling of kindness towards their brethren; and as their want of love is an injury to their fellow disciples, which will, sooner or later, return in bitterness to themselves.

I am far from intending to signify, that Christians in different places, or in the same place, are absolutely bound in duty to adopt the very same forms of ecclesiastical order. The most cordial love and fellowship, and the most profitable intercourse, may exist among Christians under different forms, as is evident in our own country, and elsewhere. But if differences in ecclesiastical forms are joined with an exclusive spirit; then the principle of love and fellowship, so often enjoined by our Saviour, is violated, and the Saviour himself, the Head of the church, is offended and dishonored. And as differences in external forms are so often made the occasion of breaking the bonds of affection among Christians; it is certainly desirable that such differences should be avoided, and that the same modes of ecclesiastical order should, as far as possible, prevail. Christians should earnestly *endeavour* to attain to a substantial uniformity. But if they fail of reaching this, they should be sure not

to fail in the spirit of brotherly love, and not to violate the principle of a free and cordial fellowship, *as members of Christ's spiritual kingdom.*

In these remarks on Christian fellowship, I have in mind an important distinction between good men, considered as such, and any opinions or practices of theirs which we deem to be erroneous. It is evident from the Scriptures and from common observation, that good men may adopt views which are more or less incorrect respecting the doctrines of religion, and more particularly respecting the external modes of worship and church government. Now it is very clear that we can consistently acknowledge them to be *Christians*, and heartily receive them and hold communion with them *as Christians*, while we bear a humble and affectionate, but faithful testimony against what we believe to be erroneous. In this we only conform to the truth. For the truth is, as we understand it, that they *are good men*, called of God, born of his Spirit, and heirs of his kingdom. We love them and treat them as such. We believe Christ receives them, and we harmonize with him, receiving those whom he receives, having communion with Christ in the very act of having communion with his followers. This is acting according to the truth. On the other hand, it is a truth, as we understand it, that these fellow Christians are chargeable with some mistakes,—mistakes, however, which may exist consistently with their possessing the character of true Christians. Still they are real mistakes, and mistakes in the view of Christ their Saviour. But does he approve these mistakes, or pass by them as of no consequence, because they are found in his disciples? By no means. Neither should we. *He*

bears testimony against their errors by his word and providence, and by the teaching of his Spirit, either in their minds, or in the minds of others, or in both. And his testimony will sooner or later be effectual. In like manner we also, in a way suitable to our condition, should labor to point out the mistakes which prevail in the church, and to expose their hurtful nature and tendency, having a desire that our fellow Christians should be rid of their mistakes, in proportion as we are sincere and ardent in our love. This too is acting according to the truth. In both parts of the conduct here described, we are perfectly consistent. Nor can we be consistent in any other way. If we refuse to acknowledge good men, and to receive them to our fellowship, we act against Him who is our perfect pattern, and who loves and receives all believers. And it is equally evident, that if we countenance the mistakes which we find among good men, or neglect any proper efforts to correct them, we act against Him who came, as a Prophet, to bear witness to the truth.

My second remark is, that *some definite form of ecclesiastical government is essential to the order and prosperity of the church*. The affairs of the church must be administered, and must be administered in some particular mode. Of this every one will be satisfied. Government must evidently have some form, or it does not exist. And no arguments are necessary to show, that the more definite and intelligible its form, the more easily and effectually may it be executed. Ecclesiastical government, in order to its just administration, requires, as really as civil government, specific principles and rules.



And to prevent confusion and strife, and to promote the highest degree of prosperity, the rules of government in the church should be comparatively few in number, definite and simple, well understood, firmly established, and strictly observed. In ecclesiastical as in civil society, it is important that we have the wisest and best government. But it is still more important that we have *some* government.

My third remark is, that *in settling the form of church government, and the specific rules according to which it is to be administered, we must carefully observe all the principles which are made known in the Christian Scriptures.*

Christ and his Apostles must be regarded as infallible teachers. Whatever doctrine they taught, we receive as divine truth, and as binding upon our faith. Whatever moral precept they gave, we receive as of divine authority, and as binding upon our practice. And why are we not equally bound to observe whatever they taught relating to the subject now under consideration? If we find any direction or act of Christ, or his Apostles, respecting the government of the church; why are we not to regard it as expressing his mind, or the mind of his inspired Apostles, as to the proper manner of administering our ecclesiastical affairs? And why is not an expression of the divine will as obligatory on us relative to this subject, as to any other? How can we feel ourselves at liberty to disregard the precepts or the example of our infallible guides in this case, more than in any other? If in regard to any of the particular forms of proceeding in Church Government, we are left without any defi-

nite instruction from the word of God; we are so far at liberty, yea, we are under obligation, to make a proper use of our own judgment and discretion. In the case supposed, (and I think such cases really occur,) it is manifestly the will of God, that we should proceed according to our conviction of what is proper and expedient. But if we find general principles of ecclesiastical government established in the word of God; those principles are to govern us. They constitute what we may justly call *the Constitution of Church Government*. Particular legislation may be called for. But whenever we undertake to legislate, we should keep our eye upon those permanent scripture principles, which form our *Ecclesiastical Constitution*, and should remember, that any act of ours, contravening those principles, would be wholly unauthorized, and would be marked with a rashness and arrogance very displeasing to God.

There is, in my view, only one thing, which can in the least modify the suggestions I have now made. It is admitted, that Christ and his Apostles were guided by infallible wisdom; but it may perhaps be said, that their wisdom was exercised with reference to the circumstances of the times in which they lived, every direction and act of theirs having been certainly right *in those circumstances*. But suppose some direction or act of those infallible guides related to some matter which was not of a moral or spiritual nature, and which, in itself, involved no permanent obligation; some outward form, the propriety and expediency of which depended on existing circumstances. The question is, whether, in other and very different circumstances, we are necessarily bound to conform exactly to such a direction, or such an exam-

ple. And this is my reply. If the direction or act of Christ or his Apostles was manifestly *grounded upon* the peculiar circumstances then existing, and if circumstances now exist which are materially different, and so different, that had they existed in the time of Christ or his Apostles, the direction or act referred to would unquestionably have been different; in such a case we should be at liberty to govern ourselves by other principles. As an illustration of this matter, take the judgment which the Apostle gave to the Christians at Corinth, that it was expedient for them, as far as practicable, to abstain from marriage. His judgment or advice was plainly grounded on the peculiar circumstances of the time, namely, the persecutions and sufferings to which Christians were then exposed. The Apostle expressly referred to those circumstances, as the reason of his advice. And had it not been for those circumstances, no one can suppose such advice would have been given. Now when circumstances become essentially different, and the reasons on which the advice of the Apostle was grounded no longer exist; it is manifest that we are not bound by that advice, but are at liberty to regulate our conduct by those other considerations, which are obvious to reason, and sanctioned by the word of God.

The principle I have now laid before you is very clear, and applies to the present subject. Accordingly, if it shall appear, that any direction or act of Christ or his Apostles relative to Church Government, was evidently grounded on peculiar circumstances then existing, and not on general and immutable principles; and if, at the present time, those circumstances have ceased, and others, having a very different bearing on the subject,

have come in their place; then, I apprehend, that direction or act of Christ or his Apostles is not to govern us. Indeed there may be imperious reasons why we should deviate from it. Circumstances may now exist, which, had they existed in the time of Christ or his Apostles, would have materially varied the direction or act referred to. Take one or two instances. Christ directed the man who was healed of the leprosy, to go and show himself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded; and Paul, for special reasons existing at that time, circumcised Timothy. No man can suppose that such a direction would have been given, or such an act performed, in circumstances like those which now exist. And of course, no man can think that either the one or the other is to govern us.

With the exception of such cases,—if such are found to exist,—we must regard any direction of Christ, or any direction or act of his Apostles, in regard to Church Government, as establishing a principle, which is obligatory on Christians at all times. What the real facts in the case are, and whether circumstances exist which are a proper ground for the exception above-mentioned, will be the subject of inquiry in the sequel.

There are, in a general point of view, two forms of Church Government. 1. *Prelacy*, or *government administered by Prelates, or Bishops*. 2. *Government of a popular character*.

Prelacy is thus described by Hooker. “A Bishop is a minister of God, unto whom with permanent continuance, there is given, not only power of administering the word and sacraments, which power other Presbyters have, but also *a farther power to ordain ecclesiastical*



persons, and a power of chiefly in government over *Presbyters as well as laymen*. So that this office as he is a *Presbyter* or *Pastor*, consisteth in those things which are common to him with other *Pastors*, as in ministering the word and sacraments;—but those things incident to his office, which properly make him a *Bishop*, cannot be common to him with other *Pastors*. Now—*Bishops*—are either at large, or else with restraint; at large, when the subject of their government—is not tied to any certain place. *Bishops* with restraint are they, whose government over the church is contained within some definite, local compass beyond which their jurisdiction reacheth not.” *Episcopalians* expressly claim for their system the sanction of Scripture and the *Primitive Church*, and maintain that from the *Apostle’s* time there have been three orders of ministers in the *Church of Christ*, *Bishops*, *Priests*, and *Deacons*.

The plan of my *Lectures* is simple. As in my deliberate and settled opinion, I differ from the advocates of *Prelacy*, I shall state somewhat particularly the *reasons* of this difference. In other words, I shall give you my *chief objections against Prelacy*.

My first objection is, that *the leading principles of Prelacy, as now understood and practised, are not authorized by the Christian Scriptures*.

The constitution of the *Jewish priesthood* has been considered by some, as requiring, or warranting, a similar constitution in the *Christian ministry*. In the *Jewish Priesthood* there were three orders; the *High Priest*, the *Priests*, and the *Levites*. But there is no intimation in the *New Testament*, that the *Christian ministry* was

to be formed after the model of the former Priesthood. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews takes pains to show that the Jewish Priesthood, which was a part of the Mosaic ritual, is done away ; that Jesus Christ, and he only, is the High Priest of Christians ; and that all who are set apart to the work of preaching the gospel are his ministers, or servants. There is a wide and obvious difference between the plan of the gospel ministry as laid down in the New Testament, and the plan of the Priesthood, as laid down in the Old Testament. And whatever may be pretended by some Episcopalians, they are far from making the Jewish Priesthood their model. The three orders among Episcopal ministers do not by any means correspond with the orders in the Jewish Priesthood. And any attempt to make them more nearly correspond, would end in a still more visible and unwarrantable departure from the teachings of the New Testament.

It is clear, that there is no foundation for Prelacy in any of the *appointments* or *instructions of Christ*. Take his appointment of the seventy disciples, who were sent forth to teach, to work miracles, and to call sinners to repent and believe. This arrangement was intended for important purposes at the commencement of the Christian dispensation. But no one considers it as permanent. And if it had been designed to be permanent, it would be as far as possible from giving any countenance to the Episcopal scheme of three orders in the ministry.

In the next place, Jesus chose twelve of his disciples to be his constant companions, to hear his instructions and witness his miracles, and thus to be trained up for the special work assigned them. "He ordained twelve,"

says Mark, "that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils." These disciples Jesus finally commissioned to go forth as his Apostles, and qualified them by the gift of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of his miracles, and particularly of his resurrection, and to be infallible teachers and guides. See Matt. 28 : 19, 20. Mark 16 : 15, 16. Acts 1 : 8. The work to which they were called was a special and momentous work. It was the work of proclaiming the Gospel, founding the first churches, establishing the Christian religion by preaching and by miracles, completing the volume of inspiration, and exercising, under Christ, a paramount authority in all the concerns of religion. Their commission and their endowments were adapted to the peculiar objects which were then to be accomplished. Those peculiar objects having been accomplished, the peculiarities of their office ceased. They were indeed religious teachers, ministers of the gospel ; and *as such*, they have *successors*. But they were teachers and ministers in a peculiar sense, and with peculiar qualifications, and peculiar authority. Considered in this light, they have no successors. Others have been sent forth as *missionaries*, as the word *Apostles* literally signifies. But those first Christian missionaries were distinguished above all others ; and the word Apostles, in a high and peculiar sense, has been appropriated to them. Now how does the fact that Christ appointed the Apostles to that peculiar work, and distinguished them by their qualifications from other ministers, prove that one set of ministers in after ages is to fill an office and possess qualifications above others ? All true ministers

of Christ take the place of the Apostles considered *simply as gospel ministers*. But where are the men at the present day, who inherit what was *peculiar* to the Apostolic character and office, or what distinguished the Apostles from other gospel ministers? The welfare, and even the continuance of the Church requires that men, properly qualified, should from time to time be set apart for the work of the *ministry*; and that the ministry should be a *permanent* institution. In this sense there is a succession, I do not say an uninterrupted, but a real succession, from the Apostles to the present time. But it can no more be proved that subsequent ministers of the gospel share the peculiarities of the apostolic office, than that they share the peculiarities of the office of Moses or David. When a special and temporary work is to be accomplished, God gives men special qualifications, and a special, temporary commission. And when there is an *ordinary* work to be accomplished, a work which is to be continued from age to age; God gives men qualifications and invests them with an office suited to that *ordinary* work. As far as the work to be done by ordinary ministers of the gospel bears a resemblance to the work which was to be done by Moses, or David, or the twelve Apostles, so far, and no farther, can we suppose a resemblance between them in regard to their respective offices and qualifications. So far as the *peculiarities* of the work assigned to Moses, or David, or the Apostles are concerned, a resemblance between them and ordinary ministers is precluded. In the arrangements of divine wisdom, means are always adapted to ends.

But I must make one more remark. If it was indeed the design and the appointment of Christ, that there



should be permanently a superior order in the gospel ministry, sharing in the peculiarities of the *Apostolic office*, it would certainly be reasonable to expect them to be possessed of the *peculiar qualifications* of the Apostles, and with qualifications above those of the inferior orders. But I know not that the superior order of ministers in the Episcopal church pretend to be indued with any of the peculiar qualifications of the Apostles, or with qualifications above those which are found in the inferior orders. And I am sure that the work which Prelates take upon themselves to perform, is widely different from the peculiar work of the Apostles,—in some respects falling short of it, and in other respects going beyond it. Whereas, if Prelacy were founded upon the superior office of the Apostles, it ought to have substantially the same functions assigned to it, not varying from its standard either in the way of deficiency or excess. But in reality, modern Prelates omit altogether the principal works which were peculiar to the Apostolic office, such as being witnesses of the life and death and resurrection of Christ, casting out devils, and doing other miracles, preaching and writing under the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit; while in other respects, particularly in assuming and exercising *exclusively* the right of ordination, they transcend the powers exercised by the Apostles. But the consideration of this point comes more properly under another head. It is sufficient for my present purpose to show, that the existence of the superior office and superior endowments of the Apostles, affords no ground for the existence of a superior order among gospel ministers in subsequent ages. In other words; its having been the will of Christ that the Apos-

ties, for the special purposes then to be accomplished, should be invested with distinguished powers and hold a special and distinguished office, does not prove it to be his will that a particular order of ministers should exist in after ages, holding an office like that of the Apostles, and superior to that of ordinary ministers. Prelacy cannot be legitimately founded on the apostolic office. And how it comes to pass, that the advocates of Prelacy rest their cause so much on the superior authority belonging to the Apostles, it is difficult for me to understand. Their reasoning on this point appears to me to be wholly inconclusive, unless they can show that there is now the same necessity for the office of Prelates, as there was originally for the office of Apostles.

It may be thought that the passage, Matt. 18: 18, affords support to the high claims of Bishops. Christ said to his Apostles, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." But what does this prove? The Apostles, as appointed and qualified by Christ, were invested with peculiar authority, and were enabled infallibly to exercise their authority in the business of *Church discipline*; for this was the subject introduced in the three preceding verses. They were to have the gift of the Holy Spirit in such measures, that their instructions and their decisions should always be right, and their acts in the affair of *binding* and *loosing*, should be confirmed in heaven. But this proves nothing as to three orders in the ministry. And it is no proof of the superior authority of Bishops, unless it is made to appear that they possess the miraculous endowments which belonged to the Apostles. In connection with this, take the

passage, John 20 : 22, 23, " Jesus breathed on the Apostles, and said, receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." The authority here intended, whatever it was, belonged to the *Apostles, as indued with the Holy Ghost*. But what proof does it afford of the authority of one order of ministers in the Episcopal church above that of other orders ? Episcopalians themselves do not regard it in this light. For when the Bishop ordains *Priests*, he says to them, " receive ye the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest—whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven ; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained." Now I suppose the Priest actually exercises the authority thus committed to him by the Bishop. But how does he exercise it ? This appears from the declaration of absolution, or remission of sins, made by the Priest in the daily service. He says : " Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,—hath given power and commandment to his ministers to *declare* and *pronounce* to his people, *being penitent*, the remission of their sins. HE pardoneth all those who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel. Wherefore let us beseech him to grant us true repentance, etc." This then I judge to be the meaning ; that when it is said to the Priest at his ordination, " whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven ;" he is authorized to *declare*, that *God* will forgive those who repent, and then to pray for repentance, etc. This is what the Priest does in the affair of absolution. It is evident that the Bishop is not at all distinguished above the Priests, in this affair of pronouncing absolution to the penitent. Whether done

by the Bishop or Priest, it is merely declaring that momentous doctrine of the gospel, that God will forgive the penitent. And the right to declare this truth, which belongs alike to all gospel ministers, is no proof of the superiority of one order above another. This right, or authority, was exercised by the Apostles, *as inspired* men, and therefore *infallible*. It is exercised by ministers at this day, not as inspired,—not as having received the Holy Ghost in the peculiar sense in which the Apostles received it, but as *instructed by* inspired men. Understood as a declaration of a gospel truth, followed by a prayer for repentance and pardon, the rite or practice of absolution is very suitable, and occasions no mistake. But the application to any uninspired men of the exact words which Christ addressed to his inspired Apostles, is, in my apprehension, quite unwarrantable. And I am glad to see in the ordination service, that a second form is provided, in which the words of Christ to his Apostles, John 20 : 22 are omitted. I suppose the first form or the second is used, as may suit the feelings of those concerned.

Having considered that there is nothing in the appointment of the Apostles to their peculiar office, which can give support to Prelacy ; I proceed to say, that *Prelacy can receive no support from the instructions of Christ*. If we could find that, in any of his teachings addressed publicly to the multitude, or privately to the Apostles, he made it known as his will, that there should in following ages be different ranks or orders among his ministers, there would be no place left for any question or hesitation on our part. But no intimation of this kind appears in any of the instructions of Christ related by



the Evangelists, or in anything which the inspired Apostles said or did after the ascension of Christ. If any of the Apostles had on any occasion signified, that, in their free intercourse with Christ, they had learnt it to be his intention, that there should be different orders in the ministry, either immediately or ultimately; this would be a conclusive argument for Prelacy. But nothing like this can be found.

I have recently read a sermon, which was delivered in Boston last December by the Right Reverend William H. De Lancey, D. D.—a sermon in which the American Prelate gives a description of the character and reward of a faithful Bishop, which is worthy of the serious attention of every gospel minister. I now refer to it, because it contains a passage relative to the subject which has just been under consideration. The author undertakes to reply to the objection urged against Episcopacy, *from the alleged uncertainty of the succession of Bishops*. He says; “Our answer is, that the promise of perpetuity is from the lips of him, who has explicitly declared that His words shall not fail. ‘As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.’ ‘Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.’ The same power, which has preserved the Scriptures true, through the successive copies and editions, amidst the distractions of persecution, the perversities of ignorance, and the distortions of heresy and schism, so that, at this moment, the pure word of God can be ascertained, is fully adequate to the faithful preservation of the ministry.”—“It is not to human planning, but to divine interposition, that we appeal. The promise is from the lips of Him whose power is adequate

to the fulfilment.”—Again he says; “ We may repose, with unshaken confidence, on the ability of the Promiser to fulfil his pledge.”

We heartily agree with the Prelate, that we “ may repose, with unshaken confidence, on the ability of the Promiser to fulfil his pledge;” that his “ power is adequate to the fulfilment of his promise,” that is, “ to the faithful preservation of the ministry;” and also that the promise of Christ implies “ a succession of validly commissioned ministers, to the end of the world.” All this we hold as strongly as Episcopalians can do. With devout gratitude we receive the promise of our Redeemer, as a blessed encouragement to all his faithful ministers, whether in the Episcopal, Congregational, Presbyterian, or Baptist Church. True gospel ministers of different denominations have relied upon this gracious promise, and have experienced its fulfilment, and have been animated and comforted by it in their labors. And I cannot doubt that ministers of other denominations have received the benefits of the promise as uniformly, and in as high a degree, as those of the Episcopal church. Nor can I admit that the benefits they have thus received, are stolen benefits,—benefits to which Christ has given them no title. As a matter of fact, he has bestowed the benefits of his presence as readily and as bountifully upon good ministers who are out of the Episcopal church, as upon those who are in it. The Lord Jesus is no respecter of persons; and in the fulfilment of his gracious promise, he makes no difference among pious and faithful ministers, because they differ as to outward forms. If Episcopalians set up an exclusive claim to the promise, that claim we know will not be sanctioned by their

Lord and Master. We appeal from them to him. And we shall continue to go to him, and plead his promise, and beseech him to grant his presence, with all the blessings involved in it, not only to us, but to all his faithful ministers, whether they follow with us, or not, being fully persuaded, that whatever straitness or partiality there may be among poor, imperfect, erring men, there is none in HIM. Yes; we shall always prize that promise of Christ, and shall apply it to ourselves, undeserving as we are. Sensible that we are utterly insufficient for the arduous duties of the ministry, we shall trust in his all-sufficient grace, praying him to be with us, according to his word. And why should any of those who differ from us in regard to ecclesiastical forms, attempt to exclude us from the benefits of Christ's precious promise? In his infinite fulness is there not enough for them, and for us? With our present views, we shall continue to appropriate the promise to ourselves. And if we are ever convinced that it does not belong to us, we shall at once abandon the ministry, well knowing the truth of Christ's declaration; "without me ye can do nothing."

The author of the able and edifying sermon referred to considers the promise of Christ, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," as a clear and certain proof of *the perpetual succession of Bishops*. *Bishops*, that is, *Prelatical Bishops*, he regards as the successors of the Apostles. In a *qualified* sense, Bishops, such as he describes in his sermon, are doubtless *successors* of the Apostles; that is, they *follow* or *come after* the Apostles, and sustain an office in *some respects* like that of the Apostles. In a *limited* sense, they carry forward the work of the gospel ministry, which, in a

higher sense, was committed to the Apostles at the commencement of the Christian dispensation. In this qualified sense, I hold that faithful Bishops are successors of the Apostles. But are they the *only* successors? And does the promise of Christ belong *exclusively* to them? If Bishops are the *only* successors of the Apostles, and if the promise of Christ belongs to none except Bishops; then what becomes of the great body of gospel ministers in the Episcopal church and in other parts of the Christian church, who are *not* Bishops? There are in the kingdom of Christ on earth many hundreds of gospel ministers to one Prelate. What, I ask, becomes of all these, left as they are without the presence of their Lord and Master? But if the promise relates to Gospel ministers who are not Bishops; then it may be fulfilled towards a succession of such ministers. And if so, how does it imply a succession of *Bishops*? And wherein lies the strength of the argument, by which the author attempts to prove the perpetual succession of *Bishops*, that is, *Prelates*, from the promise of Christ?

It may be said, that the promise belongs primarily and by way of eminence to Bishops, and, in a lower sense, to the other order of ministers, ordained by Bishops. But how is this made to appear? There is nothing in the promise which indicates, that it was meant to be understood in these different senses, as applied to different orders of ministers. The promise is very simple. "Lo, I am with *you* alway, even to the end of the world." With whom? He does not say with one order of ministers in a higher sense, and with another order in a lower sense. He promised to be with the Apostles, and, by implication, with others after them, who should possess



the character of gospel ministers, and be engaged in carrying on, in a restricted sense, the great work which the Apostles began. The promise may indeed be fulfilled in different measures, as other promises are. Ministers who are distinguished for their piety and faithfulness, such as Leighton, Scott, Cecil, Henry Martyn, Baxter, Edwards, Brainerd, Payson, Andrew Fuller, and Davies, will undoubtedly enjoy the presence of Christ in a higher degree, than ministers less pious and faithful. And this is *equally* true in regard to ministers of different denominations. The Lord Jesus Christ is a *Great King*; and in administering the affairs of his great kingdom, he does not proceed according to the narrow and exclusive notions which so often influence the minds of men. His thoughts and ways are exceedingly different from ours. Show me a gospel minister, of whatever name, who is filled with the Holy Ghost, and preaches the truth in love and fidelity; and you show me one, to whom Christ will specially grant his promised presence. And surely the fulfilment of his promise manifests to whom he intended it should belong. For does he not act according to his intentions? I ask the pious author of the sermon before me, and other Episcopal ministers like him, whether it is not so. And they will permit me also to ask, whether they think their Blessed Lord is present with *them*, because they are *Episcopalians*,—or, because they truly love him, and faithfully preach his gospel. If they say, though I presume they will not,—yet if any of them say, for the former reason, that is, because they are *Episcopalians*; then I ask, for what reason Christ is so evidently and so graciously present with those ministers who are *not* Episcopalians? But if they say, for the latter

reason, that is, because they truly love him, and do the work of the ministry faithfully; then they will doubtless admit, that other ministers, possessing the *same character*, may regard the promise as made to *them*, and may expect to realize its accomplishments. There are, besides Bishops, multitudes of gospel ministers, who have the heart and who do the work of true and faithful servants of Christ, and to whom he does in fact, and according to his intention, fulfil his precious promise. And if all that is implied in the promise has or may have its accomplishment in a succession of those whom the omniscient Redeemer regards and treats as good and faithful ministers, though *not Bishops*; then the question returns; how does the promise prove a succession of Bishops, in distinction from other gospel ministers? The promise of Christ is a matter of great *practical* moment; and I have chosen to treat it as such. And let me say again, so that it may not be forgotten;—if being included within the reach of this gracious promise, and enjoying the benefits of its fulfilment, proves men to be successors of the Apostles; then faithful Congregational, Presbyterian, and Baptist ministers are such successors, as truly as *Bishops*; and the promise no more proves the continued existence of these, than of those. The fulfilment of the promise by the unchangeable Promiser, certainly shows how he intended his promise to be understood and applied. Pious and faithful *Bishops*, such as are set before us in this sermon, are, I doubt not, in an important, though qualified sense, successors of the Apostles, to whom the promise belongs. Pious and faithful Presbyters and Deacons in the Episcopal church, are also successors of the Apostles. Otherwise, how could they,

equally with Bishops, be entitled to the promise? Thus far the advocates of high Church principles agree with us. And here they stop. But HE who is Head over all things to the church, which he bought with his own blood, does not stop here. *They* limit the succession of true gospel ministers and the intent of Christ's promise to *Bishops*, and those who are ordained by Bishops. Not so with *him* who made the promise, and who has all power in heaven and earth. *He* speaks and acts on larger principles. 'There is nothing, nothing at all, either in the language of the promise, or in its obvious meaning, or in the manner of its fulfilment, which restricts it to a succession of *Bishops*, or which proves the existence of such a succession, any more than a succession of other gospel ministers. And if we would agree with our Blessed Lord,—if we would have our views and feelings correspond with his mind, as expressed in his word and providence; we must guard not only against pride and bitterness, but against all narrowness and bigotry and party spirit, and must pray for enlargement of heart, and must rejoice in the wide extent of Christ's promise, and in the length and breadth of his love.

It is in this way that I dispose of the passage quoted above, in which the author cites the promise of Christ, Matt. 28: 20, as a plain, conclusive argument, on which he confidently relies, to prove *the perpetual succession of Bishops*. I maintain, that neither the occasion, nor the language of the promise, nor its obvious meaning, nor the facts of its accomplishment, prove any such thing. Episcopalians may affirm, that it is a principle settled and certain, that *Bishops* are the only successors of the Apostles, and that they and those ordained by them are

the only authorized and lawful ministers of Christ. What I have aimed to show in these remarks, is, that this principle cannot be proved from the promise of Christ. And I will only add, that I can no more admit, that Bishops and those who are ordained by them, are the only authorized and lawful ministers of Christ, than that hereditary kings and nobles are the only authorized and lawful rulers.



## LECTURE II.

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IN the last Lecture, I stated it as my first objection against Prelacy, that *it is not authorized by the Christian Scriptures*. In discussing this point, I referred you particularly to the *appointments* and *instructions* of Christ, during his public ministry on earth. And I think it was made manifest, that there is nothing in his appointment of the seventy disciples, or of the twelve Apostles, or in the instructions he gave them, which affords the least support to Prelacy.

Let us now inquire whether anything favorable to Prelacy can be found in *the Acts of the Apostles*;—anything in the conduct of those, whom Christ appointed to preach his gospel and propagate his religion, which implied, that there should be three orders in the ministry, and that one of these orders, namely, Bishops, should exercise authority, not only over the churches, but over two subordinate orders of ministers. Had the Apostles so understood the matter, they would doubtless have said or done something to show it. For they were commissioned and qualified to be witnesses and ministers of Christ, and, in his name, to teach the doctrines and laws of his kingdom, to establish churches, and to settle everything pertaining to their order and prosperity. And it was manifestly of great importance, that they should give a right direction to the great concerns of Christianity at the outset. What, I ask, is the practice of zealous



Bishops of the present day, who believe themselves called to fill an office similar to the Apostles? Do they not on all occasions make the doctrine of Prelacy very prominent? And if they go, as the excellent Bishop of Calcutta and other Bishops have gone, to places where Christ has not been known, and engage in the great work of preaching the gospel and establishing churches; do they not, among *the very first things*, make known their principles of Church government? And whenever they organize a church, do they not take good care to have those principles well understood, and to arrange everything according to the Episcopal plan? Their peculiar belief naturally leads to such a practice. And if their belief is right, their practice is right; and every one who honestly entertains that belief, will show it by his practice. But how was it with the Apostles, who were called of God to take the lead in establishing the kingdom of Christ among Jews and Gentiles, and who were responsible for giving, from the first, a right direction and form to the churches? If they had been led by the teaching of Christ, or of the Holy Spirit, to hold the ecclesiastical principles now held by Episcopalians; would they not have been as honest and faithful as Episcopalians now are;—and would they not have done, in some good measure, as Episcopalians do? Would they have been chargeable with that, which Episcopalians would now think an unpardonable neglect? Look, then, for yourselves, into the history of the *Acts* of the *Apostles*, and carefully notice their particular proceedings and instructions, and see whether they did as Episcopalians do;—see whether they did anything or taught anything, which shows, that they really meant to estab-

lish the Episcopal plan of Church government. Do you find anything in the account given of the choice of one to fill the place of Judas? Do you find anything in the proceedings of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost? Do you find anything in Chap. vi., where we have an account of the choice of seven men, commonly called Deacons, whom the Apostles set apart to their work by prayer and the imposition of hands? What is there in this transaction, which is favorable to any part of the Episcopal plan of Church Polity? These Deacons or servants of the church were chosen and set apart as *almoners*, that is, distributors of the charities of the church; not as an order of gospel ministers or preachers, though some of them afterwards preached. But what resemblance has this transaction to the proceeding of Bishops in ordaining those whom they call Deacons, and who constitute the lowest order of Episcopal ministers?

In Acts xv. we are informed of disputes and difficulties which arose at Antioch respecting circumcision, and of the manner in which they were adjusted. It was a very important affair, and required the exercise of the highest wisdom and the highest authority. But by whom was it decided? Not by a Bishop; not by an Apostle, nor by a number of Apostles; but by the Apostles, and Elders, and "the whole church" at Jerusalem. Was there anything in the mode of proceeding on that occasion, which was in any respect like that which is marked out by the rules of the Episcopal church? Was there any appearance of a Prelate, either at Antioch or at Jerusalem? In those large churches, was there, in this important and difficult case, any exercise of Prelatical authority, even by the Apostles? But I shall have oc-

casion to advert to this case again. All that my present object requires is to show, that what took place at Antioch and Jerusalem, as here related, gives no support to the Episcopal plan of Church Polity.

The next passage in the Acts, which relates to our subject is Chap. xx. The Apostle Paul gathered together the Elders or Presbyters of the church of Ephesus, that he might make his farewell address to them. I have only to say here, that there is nothing in his address to those Presbyters, or in what we learn of the state of things in the church at Ephesus, which can give any support to Prelacy. Let any one carefully read this chapter, and then say, whether there is any reason to think, that Paul, who had a direct agency in the first formation of that church, which doubtless comprised several congregations, established different orders of ministers? Is there anything which implies, that one of those, called Elders, was invested with authority over the others? Taking everything into view, can we find the least evidence, that Paul did, what any Episcopal Bishop would now do in a similar case, that is, that, when he established the church or churches at Ephesus, he introduced Prelacy, and that, among the officers of the church whom he addressed, there was a Prelate, that is, a Bishop having authority over the Presbyters? But this case will be brought up again under another head.

Let us now proceed to the Epistles, and inquire whether *they* give any support to Episcopacy.

Paul directed his Epistle to the Philippians thus: "To all the saints at Philippi, with the *Bishops* and *Deacons*." This, you will see in a moment, is no argument for Prelacy, as there is abundant evidence, Episcopalians them-

selves being judges, that *Bishop* and *Elder*, or *Presbyter*, were used by the Apostle, as synonymous terms. This appears also in his Epistle to Titus, Chap. i. Paul directs Titus to ordain *Elders*, adding a particular description of the qualifications which they must possess, and showing clearly, before he has done, that by Bishop and Elder he means the same officer. In Ephes. 4 : 11, the Apostle says, that Christ “ gave some Apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers—for the work of the ministry, etc.” But what is there in all this, which is favorable to the Episcopal scheme ? Here, indeed, *different orders* of ministers are mentioned ; but they are *five* orders, not *three* ; and there is no mention at all of the orders established in the Episcopal church, either Bishops, Presbyters, or Deacons. Besides, the Apostle does not give the least intimation that one of these orders was set over the other orders.—It will be natural to take this passage in connection with 1 Cor. 12 : 28 ; “ God hath set some in the church, first Apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” Here are eight varieties. The first three are orders of ecclesiastical officers ; but they have no correspondence with the three orders in the Episcopal church. The passage seems to be intended to mark *different classes of duties*, or *different departments of labor*, rather than different orders or ranks of church officers. If you will excuse me, I will attempt some illustration of the Apostle’s meaning, by what exists in this Seminary. Here the officers are all Professors, all gospel ministers, all Pastors and Teachers ; and all are of the same rank, and, in many respects,



attend to the same duties. Yet they fill different departments, and with reference to those departments, they have different titles, marking the particular work assigned to them; as, Professor of Sacred Literature, Professor of the Hebrew Language and Literature, Professor of Christian Theology, Professor of Sacred Rhetoric, Professor of Ecclesiastical History. But instead of this they might, properly enough, be designated by five distinct names, as the Greek Exegete, (if I may coin a word,) the Hebrew Exegete, the Theologian, the Rhetorician, and the Historian;—though it comes out, that they all, in a sort, teach exegesis, and Rhetoric, and History, and all, doubtless, are Theologians.

It may be thought that the case of Matthias, and Barnabas, and some others, who were called Apostles, furnishes an argument in favor of Prelacy. As to Matthias; he was appointed to fill a vacancy made by the apostasy of Judas, and so came to be one of the twelve Apostles, not a *successor* of the Apostles. And it is very easy to account for it that Barnabas and others should be called Apostles, on the ground of their being engaged as *Missionaries* in the same general work of preaching the gospel with the Apostles, and perhaps being indued in some measure with miraculous gifts; though the chief peculiarities of the Apostolic office did not belong to them. At any rate, there is no evidence that they sustained an office like that of *Prelates*; and of course, they cannot be referred to as affording any support to Prelacy.

Episcopalians have argued in favor of Prelacy from 1 Tim. 1 : 20. Paul, speaking of Hymeneus and Alexander, says: "Whom I delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." The sum of the argu-



ment is this: *Paul, in the exercise of his authority as an Apostle, administered church discipline upon two notorious offenders in the church at Ephesus. Bishops are the successors of the Apostles, and are in this respect invested with the same authority; and therefore it belongs to them to administer church discipline.* Let us examine this argument.

The punishment of these apostates at Ephesus, like that of the incestuous person at Corinth, was, I think, preternatural. The language plainly denotes something more than simple excommunication. The power of the Apostle to inflict such punishment, was miraculous, and was as real though not so remarkable an instance of supernatural agency, as the punishment inflicted upon Ananias and Sapphira. This miraculous power belonged preëminently to the Apostles. But surely the exercise of this power in some extraordinary cases was not intended to make void the precept of Christ, in Matt. xviii, as to the ordinary treatment of offences. If the fact, that Paul, by his supernatural power, as an Apostle, inflicted such a punishment upon heinous offenders, proves anything relevant to the case in hand, it proves that modern Bishops are competent to do the same as the Apostle did. And if it proves this, it proves that Bishops may now write inspired Epistles, as the Apostles did.

Episcopalians hold, that the church at Ephesus had a Bishop, that is, Timothy, as well as Presbyters; and they hold that a Bishop is entrusted with the same power of administering church discipline, as belonged to the Apostles. Timothy, then, the Bishop of Ephesus, had this power, and, no doubt, he knew that he had it. Why

did he not exercise it? And why did Paul, who had given it to the Bishop, interfere with it?

According to the reasoning of Episcopalians, the Apostle's exercising the power of church discipline in this case, is a proof that it did not belong to the church, or the Elders of the church. And does it not equally prove that it did not belong to the Bishop? The argument then seems to stand thus: *A Bishop, that is, Timothy, is a successor of the Apostles, and is invested with the sole power of administering discipline in the church. But the Apostle comes forward, and exercises that power himself in the very diocese of Bishop Timothy;—which shows very clearly, they say, that the power does not belong either to the church, or to the Presbyters; and, if the argument is straight, it shows equally, that it does not belong to the Bishop.*

The necessary limits of these Lectures forbid me to enlarge on this topic. But if we should extend our inquiries farther, the result would be the same; namely, that Prelacy, as now understood and practised, is not founded upon the Christian Scriptures. The ablest advocates of Prelacy do not pretend that it is. This is my first objection to the Episcopal scheme of Ecclesiastical Polity. And it is in my mind, an objection of no small weight. For it is to be kept in mind that Christ was the Founder and Head of the church; and it is surely reasonable to suppose that he would, in his own personal ministry, or by the ministry of those whom he appointed and qualified to act in his stead, do all which was necessary to the due establishment and the subsequent prosperity of his kingdom on earth. It is certain that he and his inspired Apostles knew what was necessary. And

considering what their relation to the church was, and what was the work they undertook, and how deep an interest they felt in it, and how great their zeal and how constant their efforts for its full accomplishment; we must regard the *fact*, that there is nothing in their recorded instructions or acts which gives support to Prelacy, as a clear indication that they did not look upon Prelacy as properly belonging to the Christian establishment. Jesus Christ did not speak, and his Apostles did not speak, or write, or act, as Episcopalians would do in a similar case. And hence we conclude that they did not *think* and *feel*, as Episcopalians do. For men, certainly honest men, are very apt to speak and act according to their opinions and feelings. So that, if the matter ended here, and nothing more appeared than this absence, this acknowledged absence of clear and explicit scripture evidence in favor of Prelacy; I should feel myself constrained to pause, and to ask, how could this be, if Christ and the Apostles meant to establish Prelacy in the Church?

I would here recommend to you a recent work on *the Apostolic Church*, by *Albert Barnes*; who examines the reasonings of Episcopalians more particularly than I can do, and who labors, I think very successfully, to show, that the Episcopal plan of church government can derive no support from the New Testament.

But the matter does not rest here. For the New Testament not only furnishes no evidence in favor of Prelacy, but much evidence against it. This is my second objection to Prelacy. The first objection I think has weight; but this has more weight.

*Second Objection. There is in the instructions of*

*Christ, and in the instructions and acts of his Apostles, evidence, direct and indirect, against the Episcopal scheme, both as to church discipline, and as to different orders in the ministry.*

I begin with saying, that the New Testament furnishes evidence *against* the Episcopal scheme in regard to *the treatment of personal offences and other difficulties in the church*. On this subject Jesus Christ gave a particular direction to his disciples; Matt. 18: 15—17, “If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.” This is a general direction from Christ himself for the treatment of offences. And why is it not binding upon his disciples in all ages? It manifestly had respect to future time; for there was not as yet any regularly organized Christian church, that could act, as here required, in the business of discipline. The direction of Christ requires, that the church, that is, the assembly of believers, should ultimately hear, and judge, and act in regard to offences committed by its members. This mode of proceeding is palpably at variance with the system of Episcopacy, which places the government of the church, in this as well as in other respects, in the hands of the Bishop. The parish minister may have a subordinate agency in the discipline of offenders. But ultimately the whole power belongs to the Bishop. On this



plan, the proceeding from beginning to end must be exceedingly different from that required by Christ. And to bring his direction to correspond with the Episcopal plan, you must make it stand thus: *If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault, etc. If he neglect to hear thee, take one or two others.—And if he neglect to hear them, tell it,—not to the church, but to the minister of the Parish, and, at last, to the Bishop.* But the minister is not *the church*, and the *Bishop* is not *the church*.

See now what was the judgment of the Apostle Paul, who had so important an agency in establishing Christian churches; and what direction he gave, in regard to the treatment of offences. A gross crime was committed by a member of the church at Corinth; and the Apostle, in conformity with the spirit of the above mentioned precept of Christ, directed the church, the whole church to come together and act in excluding the offender. Now what is there in the doings of any Episcopal church, which agrees with this Apostolic direction? In what instance is the complaint against an offender brought before *the church* for decision? In what instance are the members of the church gathered together to act in cutting off a man from their fellowship? How is it that Episcopalians so easily overlook the direction of an Apostle, and the example of a primitive church acting according to his direction, and then make so much of the opinions and conduct of erring Christians in after ages? If there were in the New Testament any precept or example as directly favourable to their scheme of Church discipline, as the above precept and example are to ours; they would be quick to discover it, and would at once



fix upon it as an unfailing support to their principles. Should it be said by any one, that the Apostle in this case plainly asserted and exercised his authority over the Corinthian Church, and was thus an example for Prelates; my reply would be;—let Prelates then take care to copy the Apostle's example, and exercise authority just as he did, not by a separate, final act of their own, but by referring the business to the churches, and directing the members to come together to deliberate and act in excommunicating offenders.

The proceedings recorded in Acts 15th, are evidently contrary to the Episcopal mode of Church government. I have already referred to these proceedings as furnishing no evidence in favor of Prelacy. I now refer to them, as furnishing evidence against Prelacy. For there was one *Apostle*, that is Paul, at Antioch, and there were *Apostles* at Jerusalem. And we may be quite sure that these Apostles, qualified as they were for their office, adopted a plan of proceeding, which was agreeable to the mind of Christ, and which may be regarded as a pattern for ministers and churches in subsequent ages. A dispute and contention arose among the disciples at Antioch respecting circumcision. They finally sent Paul and Barnabas and *certain others* to the Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem to attend to this matter. “And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of *the church*, and of the Apostles and Elders.” After Paul and Barnabas had stated the case to “*all the multitude*” assembled on the occasion, that is, to the Apostles and Elders and *the church*, and after Peter and James had spoken on the question before them, their deliberations were brought to a happy close; and it pleased the

Apostles and Elders, with the *whole church*, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch to communicate the result of their deliberations to the church at Antioch, that result being contained in a letter with this introduction: "The Apostles and Elders and *brethren* send greeting to the brethren at Antioch, etc."

In this remarkable case, we see how the concerns of the church were managed and how disputes and difficulties were adjusted in the Apostle's days. The Apostles, though divinely commissioned and divinely inspired, did not decide the question before them by their own authority, but chose to act in connection with the Elders, or Presbyters, and "*the whole Church*." And in the final result, the Elders and *the whole church* had a joint agency with the Apostles.

Here the question instantly arises; what is there in any doings of the Episcopal church, which agrees at all with these transactions? Where do you find it recorded, that in removing difficulties and settling great ecclesiastical principles, the *brethren* of the Episcopal church in any place, *even in this Republic*, came together and joined with the Bishops and Presbyters in deliberating *freely, without being controlled by the will of any one*, on a question respecting the interests of religion, and in adopting the final decision? Place a Bishop, if you will, on a level with the Apostles; but why place him above them? Why should he, in such transactions, set aside the brethren of the church, and the Elders too, and assert his supremacy over them, and act the part of Dictator, when the Apostles themselves, though invested with such high authority, did not proceed thus, but acted in concert with the Elders and the whole church? Say, if

you will, that the Apostles, though they had a *right* to decide and act on the ground of their own plenary authority, intended by such a proceeding, to set an example of singular condescension and modesty. Why then do not Bishops, who consider themselves successors of the Apostles, copy so charming an example? The plain truth is, that there is a radical fault in the *system* of Prelacy. That system does not agree with the teaching of the New Testament. When it was introduced, it was, as we shall see, an innovation upon the ecclesiastical order established and acted upon by the Apostles. It was an innovation made by uninspired men,—good men, I admit, but as liable to error, as good men are now. The system held by Episcopalians, either as to the three orders of ministers, or the mode of conducting the affairs of the church, cannot be reconciled with the pattern showed us in the New Testament. So I think. It is not,—as Episcopalians have often acknowledged,—derived from the word of God. In the respects above mentioned, it is a continuation, for substance, of the system which existed so long in the Papal church, and the system of the Papal church grew out of the innovations and corruptions which were gradually introduced by the Christian fathers in ages long after the time of the Apostles. Henry the Eighth did indeed, from personal considerations, renounce the supremacy of the Pope of Rome. But so far as the church of England was concerned, he took the place of the Pope, that is, he became the Head of the church. And he with his Bishops retained for their church, as any one may see, the essential features of the previous hierarchy, both as to ceremonies, and the orders of the Priesthood.

We have now touched upon the prominent passages in the New Testament, which relate directly to the manner of treating offences and removing disputes and dissensions occurring in the church. And I know not how to suppress the thoughts, which a review of these passages suggests to my mind. And if I repeat what I have hinted at before, the repetition is intended for the purpose of deepening the impression.

Suppose, then, that the advocates of the Episcopal scheme of Ecclesiastical government at this day, could find in the Gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, that Jesus, who had a perfect knowledge of things to come, directed his followers, in case of an offence, to deal once and again with the offender in private, and if no satisfaction should be given for the offence, to tell it to the *Bishop*,—not to the church, but to the *Bishop*; would they pass over *such* a passage, as they do Matt. 18: 15—17? And suppose that, in conformity with such a direction from Christ, they should find in one of Paul's Epistles, that he gave an express command to a *Bishop*,—not to the members of the church assembled together, but to the *Bishop*, “with the power of the Lord Jesus” to cut off an offender; would they pass over such a direction, as they do the direction of Paul to the members of the church at Corinth respecting the treatment of the incestuous person? And if they could find it related in the history of the Acts of the Apostles, that an important and difficult question respecting the interests of the church was determined and settled, not by Apostles and Elders and all the church acting together,—but by a *Bishop*, or several Bishops united,—could Episcopalians



find any thing like this; would they pass over it, as they do the case mentioned in Acts 15th?

It was suggested in the previous Lecture, that any direction of Christ or any direction or act of his Apostles respecting the transaction of business in the church, is binding upon us, unless it appears, that such direction or act was *grounded upon* peculiar circumstances then existing, and that circumstances, so essentially different, now exist, that we are evidently at liberty, and even required, to govern ourselves by other considerations. Let us inquire then, whether there is anything like this in the case now before us. Have circumstances so changed since the commencement of the Christian dispensation, that we are required, or left at liberty, to deviate from a direction of Christ, or a direction or example of an Apostle respecting the treatment of offences, or the conduct of other church affairs? Have we any sufficient reason for such deviations?

Now if there is in New England and in other parts of our country, a substantial reason at the present time, why the members of the church should be excluded from any agency in matters of discipline, and why the government of the church should be ultimately in the hands of the *Bishop*, the reason must, I think, consist in one or more of the following facts; namely; that the interests of the church are essentially different from what they originally were, and consequently require a different management; or, secondly, that the members of the church are less competent than they originally were, to have an agency in the concerns of the church; or, thirdly, that the Bishop is possessed of higher qualifications, and is of course, more competent to the government of



the church, than he was at the beginning of the Christian dispensation; or, fourthly, that the state of civil society is here so different, as to require a change from the popular forms of church government to Prelacy.—Let us consider each of these.

First. Are the essential, internal interests of the church different from what they were when Christianity was first established in the world? If any one affirms that this is the case, it will be incumbent on him to show in what respect those interests are different, and why they require a different management. Till this is done, we cannot admit that the change referred to in the plan of church government, is either necessary, or lawful.

Secondly. Is there reason to think, that the members of our churches generally are less competent to have a share in ecclesiastical government, than the members of the first churches at Jerusalem and at Corinth were? Are not Christians here as well educated, as much accustomed to think correctly, and as well prepared for important duties, as those were, who had just emerged from Judaism or Paganism, and who, even while they enjoyed the benefits of Apostolic instruction, so often showed their ignorance, and their proneness to error?

Thirdly. Will any one maintain, that a Bishop at this day is possessed of higher qualifications, and is more competent to the government of the church, than a Bishop was in the church at Jerusalem, at Corinth, or at Antioch? for assuredly, as they had churches there, they must have had Bishops. Is a Bishop at the present time, I ask, more competent to the sole exercise of church government, than a Bishop was then; and is he more competent, than an inspired *Apostle* was? for you will

keep in mind, that there were *Apostles* there, but that no Apostle undertook to decide upon the questions which came up at Jerusalem, except in concert with the Presbyters and the brethren of the church. And as to the case of discipline at Corinth, *Paul* did not go there to manage it; nor did he direct the *Bishop* to manage it; —(and doubtless the Corinthian church had a Bishop;) but he directed *the assembled church* to do it. The question is, whether a Bishop now is better qualified to govern, than a primitive Bishop, or an inspired Apostle was?

Finally. Is the state of civil society in our country such, as to require a change from a popular form of church government to Prelacy? The question carries its own answer with it. If ecclesiastical government is to conform to civil government; then, as civil government, in the time of the Apostles, was in the hands of a *Monarch*, ecclesiastical government should certainly have been in the hands of a *Prelate*. And as we live under a Republican government, (if this circumstance is to have influence,) it would seem to follow, that if Prelacy had been, (though it was not)—yet even if it had been the original plan, it should now be changed to a popular shape, to conform to our Republican institutions. But what reason, I pray, can you find in our *Republican* principles for a change from the *original popular* form of church government to an ecclesiastical monarchy, or aristocracy?

We come therefore to the conclusion, that there has been no such change of circumstances, as to justify a deviation from the plan of church discipline, which was marked out by the instructions of Christ, and by the in-

structions and example of the Apostles; and, of course, that we are as much bound to conform to that plan, as primitive Christians were. My objection then against Prelacy remains; that, in respect to church discipline, the New Testament not only fails of giving it any support, but furnishes clear evidence against it.

I now proceed to the other branch of my second objection, namely, that the New Testament contains evidence, both direct and indirect, against the Episcopal scheme, in regard to *different orders in the ministry, and the authority of Bishops.*

Now it seems to me, that everything in the New Testament relative to the Christian ministry, is different from what it would have been, if Christ and his Apostles had intended to establish different orders, and to give one order authority over the others. The seventy disciples that Jesus sent forth were all of one order. So also were the twelve Apostles. And Jesus took special pains to guard them against supposing, that one of them was to be superior in rank to the others. "Be not called masters," he said; "for one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." And when some of them, under the influence of a fond mother, indulged aspiring thoughts, and made the request, that they might be distinguished above their brethren; he rebuked them and said; "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." He then proceeded to inform them, that it should not be among them as it was among the nations of the earth, where some are appointed to exercise lordship over others; that they should not aim at power and authority, but should look upon each other as brethren and equals. If the Saviour and Head of the church had intended to

establish Prelacy, we should think that would have been a very favorable opportunity for him to allude to the subject, and to signify, that although no distinction of rank should be made among the twelve Apostles, who were to be his first ministers, it would be otherwise in subsequent times, and that the welfare of the church would ultimately require, that there should be three orders of ministers, the second being superior to the third, and the first having authority over both. Whereas all that he said on the occasion, was decidedly against the idea of any such distinction.

Let us now proceed to the Acts of the Apostles, and consider the passages, which most directly relate to the subject before us. The first which occurs is Acts 13: 1—3. In the church at Antioch, which doubtless comprised several congregations, there were certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas, and Simeon, and Lucius, and Manaen, and Saul. “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” The proceeding does not correspond at all with the Episcopal scheme. There was no one among them, so far as we can judge, who was superior in office to the others, and to whom the business was committed of separating Barnabas and Saul by prayer and the laying on of hands, and then sending them forth to the work of preaching the gospel among the heathen. No one of the twelve Apostles was there. Saul was indeed called to be an Apostle in the highest sense. But it was he and Barnabas, that were to be set apart for the special work whereunto they were



called. But was there any *superior church officer*, any *Prelate* there? Or did the Holy Ghost direct them to send for an Apostle, or for one whom the Apostles had ordained as a Prelate, to come and set apart Barnabas and Saul? Now I do not say that this was an *ordination* in the sense in which we commonly use the word. But I ask, whether any transaction like this takes place, or can take place, among modern Episcopalians; whether it would be consistent with their principles, that two of their young men should be solemnly set apart for the work of the gospel ministry among the heathen, by the laying on of the hands of those who are not Bishops. And I ask, whether the Episcopal scheme and the Episcopal practice are not, in this matter, at variance with the proceedings of the first Christian churches.

It cannot be alleged, that these proceedings took place before there had been time to organize the churches, and to develop the real and ultimate design of Christ in regard to the ministerial office. For the Apostles had been preaching about twelve years after the death of Christ, had established many churches, and had unquestionably given the necessary instruction relative to the permanent institutions of Christianity. The affairs of the church had, for many years, been receiving a proper direction and form under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit. And from the proceedings at Antioch in setting apart men to the gospel ministry among the heathen, we learn what that form was.

The next passage to which I refer, as containing evidence against Prelacy, is Acts xx. Paul gathered the Elders or Presbyters of the church at Ephesus, and said to them: "Take heed to the flock over which the Holy



Ghost hath made you *επισκοπους*, Bishops." The *Presbyters* were *Bishops*. This is clear. The two words were used interchangeably. They were applied to the same men, and denoted the same office. Now Paul had been at Ephesus no less than three years, and had done what he deemed necessary for the establishment of gospel order. The church at Ephesus was a large church, consisting doubtless of several congregations, and having several Bishops, or Presbyters, one at least, we may suppose, to each congregation; all, however, forming one church. Now, why had not Paul, during his long stay there, and in the first organization of the church, in which it was so important that everything should be done right,—why had he not appointed a Prelate for Ephesus, that is, a Bishop who should have authority over the other Bishops, or Presbyters, and a general supervision over the whole church? This certainly would have been done by any one who entertained the views of our Prelates. Why had not Paul done it? Or if he had done it, why does it not appear? Why is it not said, he sent and called the *Bishop* and the *Presbyters*? And why is it not said that he addressed himself to them distinctly, as any Bishop would now do, charging the *Prelate* to maintain a faithful care and government over the other orders of ministers, and charging the Presbyters to be faithful in their respective congregations, to love as brethren, and to show due honor and submission to their Bishop? If Paul had agreed with Episcopalians in *principle*, would he not have agreed with them in *practice*? And if Episcopalians differ from the Apostle in *practice*, is it not quite probable that they differ from him in principle too?

I argue against the doctrine of Prelacy from Paul's

Epistle to Titus, Chap. 1 : 5, 7. He directed Titus to ordain Presbyters in every city, and specified the qualifications they should possess ; and then suggests to Titus the reason for such care as to the character of a Presbyter. “ For a *Bishop* must be blameless, etc.” The whole passage makes it certain that the Apostle meant the same officer by Presbyter and by Bishop. Titus himself was a Bishop,—just such a Bishop as he was to ordain in every city. A Presbyter was a Bishop.

The address of Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians implies something, which seems to me unfavorable to Prelacy. “ To all the saints at Philippi, with the Bishops and Deacons.” The Bishops were just such church officers, as those at Ephesus, who were first called Presbyters, and then Bishops. You observe, they were *Bishops*,—not a *Bishop*, but *Bishops*,—and Bishops of the same church, or collection of churches, or, if you please, Bishops of the same diocese. It would suit the views of Episcopalians far better, had the Apostle directed his Epistle thus: “ To all the saints at Philippi, with *the Bishop, Presbyters and Deacons.*”

As to Deacons ; all we have to do is to find what information the New Testament gives. They were *servants*, or *ministers*, as the word signifies. It is applied to Phebe, Rom. 16 : 1, who in a more private way ministered to the saints, particularly, as we suppose, to poor and sick females. It is often applied to the Apostles. See 1 Cor. 3 : 5. 2 Cor. 3 : 6. 6 : 4. 11 : 23. It is applied to Timothy, 1 Thess. 3 : 2 ; to Tychicus, Ephes. 6 : 21, and Coloss. 1 : 7, and to Epaphras, Coloss. 1 : 7. Thus it appears, that the Apostles and other ministers were familiarly called *Διακονοι*, Deacons, i. e. *servants*, servants of God,

or of Christ. This is the general use of the word in the New Testament. And why may we not suppose it to be used in this general sense in Philip. 1 : 1. "To the saints at Philippi, with the Bishops and Deacons,"—or, in plain English, the *overseers* and *servants* ; i. e. to those who are both overseers and servants of the church. I acknowledge it may be used here as in 1 Tim. iii, where Bishops and Deacons are mentioned and described distinctly, implying that they were employed, as servants of Christ, in different departments of labor. But if this is the true construction, still what evidence is there, that the Deacons, as an inferior order of ministers, were subject to the Bishops? What evidence is there, that the Bishops had authority over *them*, any more than over one another? Certainly this cannot be inferred from the name. They were indeed called *deacons*, or *servants* ; and so were Timothy and Tychicus and Epaphras ; and so were the Apostles. And while the Deacons described by Paul, 1 Tim. iii, were truly *servants* ; they were, like the others just mentioned, servants of God and of Christ, but are never said to be in subjection to a Bishop. But the probability is, that they were servants of the church in a more limited sense.

I cite also 1 Tim. 4 : 14. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, *with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery.*" According to the best Philologists and critics, *Presbytery* denotes *an assembly of Presbyters*. These laid their hands on Timothy, and thus inducted him into his office. Presbyterians and Congregationalists naturally adopt this language in giving an account of their ordinations. The passage is plainly in favor of ordination by a council of

Presbyters. But it is plainly against the High Church notion of ordination by a Prelate. And Episcopalians do not naturally describe their ordinations in this way. They refer you at once to 2 Tim. 1 : 6, where the Apostle speaks of the gift which was in Timothy by the laying on of *his* hands. This passage unquestionably implies, that Paul joined with the Presbyters in ordaining Timothy by the imposition of hands. But there is not the least evidence from the two passages taken together, or from anything else, that the Presbyters had not as good a right to ordain by the laying on of hands, or as real a concern and influence in conferring the gift spoken of, as the Apostle had. The gift came indeed, from above ; and it was ascribed to human agency in only a secondary and very inferior sense. But it was ascribed to the Presbytery, as much as to Paul. And it was thus ascribed to the Presbytery by Paul himself, who certainly understood the matter. Episcopalians well know how remarkable the efforts of some of their writers have been, to make the account which Paul gives of this ordination, 1 Tim. 4 : 14, correspond with their scheme.

I shall refer to only one passage more ; 1 Pet. 4 : 1—3. Peter evidently agrees with Paul in regard to the subject under consideration. He here addresses Elders, or Presbyters, calling himself an Elder, and then exhorts them *to do the work of Bishops*, *ἐπισκοποῦντες* ; clearly identifying the office of Bishop and Elder. A Bishop, according to the New Testament use, was a minister and overseer of a church, not an overseer of Presbyters. Presbyters were Bishops, and Bishops were Presbyters. The language of the Apostles makes it exceedingly evident, that they considered all ministers on a footing



of equality. They mention no such officer, as a *Prelate*, that is, a Bishop who had authority over a number of churches, and over other Bishops.

This is acknowledged by many Episcopalians. Bishop Burnet says: "I acknowledge the office of Bishop and Presbyter to be one and the same office." Dr. Reynolds, former Professor of Divinity in Oxford, says, that all who labored for hundreds of years before him taught, that all Pastors, whether entitled Bishops or Presbyters, have equal power and authority *by God's word*. And he declares this to be the common judgment of the Reformed churches in Switzerland, Savoy, France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, the Netherlands, Scotland and England. And in a work called "The Institution of the Christian man," expressly approved by Cranmer, Jewell, Willet, and Stillingfleet, together with the King and Parliament, and the main body of the English clergy, is this declaration: "In the New Testament there is no mention of any other degrees, but of *Deacons* or *ministers*, and of *Presbyters* or *Bishops*." Burnet says: "The *King* gave Bishops their power to ordain ministers, to exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and to perform all other parts of the Episcopal function." Dr. Holland, King's Professor at Oxford, says: "To affirm the office of Bishop to be different from that of Presbyter, and superior to it, is most false,—contrary to Scripture, to the Fathers, to the doctrine of the church of England, yea, to the very schoolmen themselves." Paley says: "It cannot be proved that any form of church government was laid down in the Christian Scriptures, with a view of fixing a constitution for succeeding ages." And the Editors of the Christian Observer, 1804, say: "Episco-



pallians found not the merits of their cause upon any express injunction or delineation of ecclesiastical government *in the Scriptures*; for there is none." I shall add a recent testimony, which is of special interest. Bishop Onderdonk says, that "*in the New Testament, the name, Bishop, is given to the middle order, or Presbyters; and that all which we read in the New Testament concerning Bishops,—is to be regarded as pertaining to that middle grade.*" "*It was,*" he says, "*after the Apostolic age, that the name Bishop was taken from the second order, and appropriated to the first.*"



### LECTURE III.

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WE have now seen how the matter lies. The New Testament, instead of supporting the Episcopal scheme, furnishes much evidence against it. And the main point which I wish to support, namely, that in the time of the Apostles, Bishops and Presbyters were the same officers, and that the New Testament does not establish three orders of ministers, one of which is to have authority over the others, is acknowledged by a multitude of Episcopalians.

According to the grand principle of Protestantism, our inquiries might end here. For who can doubt that the Holy Scriptures should be our guide on this subject, as well as on any other? If the authorized founders and guides of the church saw proper, at the outset, to establish any general principles of church government, why should not those principles govern us? Now, if I mistake not, it has been made evident to you, that Presbyters and Bishops were originally officers of the same order; and that the Apostles established the principle, that there should be an equality among gospel ministers in regard to rank; and that the members of the church should act in matters of discipline. The Apostles established this important principle, well knowing that they were authorized and required to determine the order of things in the christian ministry and church, and

that they would be looked to as guides and examples in after ages. We ought, therefore, to regard and maintain this, as a settled principle in the kingdom of Christ, unless there are circumstances which make it known to be his will, that there should be a variation.

The great reason which is urged by Episcopalians to justify them in departing from the Scripture standard and in establishing Prelacy, is, that Prelacy was introduced at an early period in the Christian church. The practice of the Fathers is the argument most relied upon.

I encounter this argument at once with several inquiries.

*First.* I ask whether the early Fathers were, like the Apostles, guided by divine inspiration, and were thus qualified and authorized, as infallible guides, to make alterations in the order which the Apostles had established? If they were, then we ought to submit to their decision as readily, as to the decision of the Apostles. But this no one maintains. I come then to my

*Second inquiry.* Were the early Christian Fathers *instructed by the Apostles* to make the alteration intended, and, at the proper time, to introduce Prelacy? If there is any evidence of this, it must be found either in the instructions of the Apostles recorded in the Scriptures, or in the testimony of the early Fathers, that they received *oral* instructions from the Apostles in favor of such a change, though the instructions were not recorded.

Let us look at the first of these suppositions. In the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, we have many and very particular instructions in regard both to the ministry and the church,—instructions which related not

only to their own times, but to times following. The Apostles had a clear prophetic view of the state of the church and of the world in subsequent ages, and foretold many things that would come to pass after their decease. But does it appear that they gave any instructions relative to the subject now under consideration? Does it appear that they expressly said, or in any way intimated, that although, for the time being, they established only one order of ministers, called Presbyters or Bishops, they would have three orders established by their successors in following ages? They directed that Presbyters should be ordained in every city. But did they signify that, after a while, circumstances would require, that a Prelate should be ordained over Presbyters? Or if they did not give a positive direction that this should be done; did they give discretionary power to their successors to do it, if they should judge expedient? The subject being of so great importance, it is certainly reasonable to think that something, like what I have suggested, would have been found in some part of the New Testament, if the mind of the Apostles had been in favor of the change alluded to. But where do you find it?

Look then at the other supposition. Do the early Fathers testify, that the Apostles gave *oral* instructions, which are not recorded, that there should be three orders in the ministry? Do they in any way inform us, that there was an unwritten tradition handed down from the Apostles, in favor of Prelacy? In the writings of the Christian Fathers there is, in my judgment, no evidence of this, but much of a contrary character. I cannot go into an examination of this subject in these Lec-



tures. But others have done it. And if you will carefully attend to the best books which have been written on both sides of the question, I am confident you will be satisfied of this.

But *early practice* is appealed to. *Prelacy, it is said, generally prevailed very early; and it can hardly be supposed that this would have been the case, without some warrant from the Apostles.*

In regard to this matter, let us take care to guard against confusion. It is evident, that Prelacy did at length obtain a general prevalence in the church. But it is specially important for us to inquire, *when* it thus prevailed. There is, I think, clear and abundant evidence, that during the age of the Apostles, and for more than fifty years after the Apostles, the churches were taught and governed by Presbyters; that those who were called Bishops, were the same as Presbyters, and were Pastors and overseers of particular churches, and that there was no such officer as a Prelate, that is, a minister of superior rank, having authority over inferior orders of ministers; and also that the members of the church acted in matters of discipline, according to the doctrine of Christ in Matt. xviii. But instead of undertaking to present this evidence before you in detail, which would lead me very far beyond my limits in these Lectures, I shall in the sequel state the positions which I think tenable, and refer you to several works of a high character, in which the subject is handled very particularly and fully.

Pedobaptists have sometimes been charged with an inconsistency, because they derive an argument in support of Infant Baptism from Ecclesiastical History, and

yet deny the force of the same argument when urged in support of Prelacy.

A statement of the case, just as it is, will, I think be sufficient to show, that the charge has no solid foundation.

The chief historical argument in favor of Infant Baptism does not, in my view, arise from the fact, that the practice did at length generally prevail in the early ages ; but from *the testimony of the Fathers, that it was received from the Apostles*. In their practice, early Christians did, in many things, deviate from the principles established by the Apostles. Hence it is evident, that the mere prevalence of any practice in the fourth, third, or second century, cannot be considered as proving its divine origin, or our obligation to adopt it. But it is admitted on all hands, that the Christian Fathers were good men, and that *their testimony*, as to matters of fact within their knowledge, *can be relied upon*. Now it was doubtless known among them, what the Apostolic institutions were ; just as it is known among us, what were the original institutions of our Puritan forefathers in New England. Those who lived in the second, third and fourth centuries had such means of information, that they cannot be supposed to have fallen into any mistake. They were honest men, and cannot be supposed to have given a false testimony. And their testimony, in some instances their express and emphatic testimony is, not only that Infant Baptism was and had been universally practised among Christians, but that it was *delivered to the churches by the Apostles*. It is chiefly from *this testimony as to the origin of the practice*, and not from the mere fact of its prevalence, that I would argue in

support of Infant Baptism. Now to make the cases parallel, you must have the testimony of Christian Fathers not only that Prelacy generally prevailed at such a time, but that it was handed down, as a divine ordinance, from the Apostles. You must, I say, have their testimony, that Prelacy had uniformly existed in the Christian church, and *was received from the inspired Apostles as a permanant institution*. If such a testimony could be produced, who would not acknowledge its weight?

But we have testimony to the contrary; that is, that Prelacy was *not* received from the Apostles. And to place the historical argument for Infant Baptism on the same footing with this, it must be shown that, while Infant Baptism was universally practised in the days of Origen, Augustine, Pelagius, Tertullian, etc. the Fathers, at least some of them, declared, that it was not the practice in the Christian church originally, but was, for special reasons, introduced afterwards. If any evidence like this could be adduced, we should be obliged to abandon the historical argument for Infant Baptism, and to acknowledge that, *so far as the testimony of the Fathers goes*, the Baptists are right.

In opposition to Prelacy, we have just such testimony from the Fathers, as I have hinted at. Chrysostom says: "The Presbyters were formerly called Bishops; and the Bishops, Presbyters." Theodoret says: "Those who were called Bishops evidently held the rank of Presbyters." Irenaeus says the same of the Bishops who preceded Victor in the church at Rome. But Jerome, who lived in the latter part of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, gives the most particular testimony.

Jerome, "in the judgment of Erasmus, was without controversy by far the most learned and most eloquent of all the Christians, and the prince of Christian Divines;" and he was unquestionably familiar with the history of the Christian church from the beginning. His testimony is found in his Annotations on Paul's Epistle to Titus. In those Annotations he gives an account of the nature and origin of the office of a Bishop. And he says distinctly: "A Presbyter is the same as a Bishop. And until there arose divisions in religion, churches were governed by a common council of Presbyters. But *afterwards*, it was everywhere decreed, that one person, elected from the Presbyters, should be placed over the others." Referring to Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, which was addressed to the saints "with the Bishops and Deacons," he observes; "Philippi is a single city of Macedonia; and certainly there could not have been several like those who are now called Bishops, at one time in the same city. But as, at that time, they called the same Bishops, whom they styled Presbyters also, the Apostles spoke indifferently of Bishops as of Presbyters." Jerome alludes to the fact, that Paul, having sent for the Presbyters of the single city of Ephesus, afterwards speaks of them as Bishops; and he refers also to what Peter says: "The Presbyters who are among you I exhort, who am also a Presbyter.—Feed the flock of God—taking the oversight, *ἐπισκοποῦντες*, *exercising the office of a Bishop, etc.*" "These things," Jerome says, "we have brought forward to show that, *with the ancients*, Presbyters were the same as Bishops. *But in order that the roots of dissension might be plucked up, a usage gradually took place, that the whole care should*



*devolve upon one.* Therefore, as the Presbyters know, that it is *by the custom of the church* that they are subject to him who is placed over them; so let Bishops know, that they are above Presbyters rather *by custom*, than by the truth of our Lord's appointment." Jerome aims, in this way, to inculcate upon Bishops the duty of a meek and humble carriage. All this is in accordance with what Tertullian says on the same subject.

Many of the advocates of Prelacy in the English church, as well as elsewhere, admit the identity of *ἐπισκοπος* and *πρεσβυτερος*, in the primitive church, and that the distinction, which prevailed in the third and fourth centuries, was unknown for a long time after the Christian church was founded by the Apostles.

You see how the matter stands, as to the abovementioned charge of inconsistency. In regard to Infant Baptism, we have the testimony of the most respectable Fathers that the institution was handed down from the Apostles, but not the least hint from any one of them, that it was not so. But in regard to Prelacy, we have no testimony from the Fathers, that it was appointed by the Apostles. On the contrary, we have their testimony that it was not known in the Apostolic age, or near it, but was introduced afterwards.

I have said, that the *mere practice* of the ancient church cannot in any case be adduced, as conclusive evidence of a divine institution. But even in regard to ancient practice, there is an obvious difference between Infant Baptism and Prelacy. In the first place; there is evidence that Infant Baptism was practised universally in the early churches; while there is no such evidence, but the contrary, in regard to Prelacy. Secondly :



there is clear evidence, that Prelacy was gradually introduced long after the age of the Apostles, with a view to remedy existing evils. But there is no evidence that Infant Baptism was thus gradually introduced, or introduced at all, after the time of the Apostles. So that the argument, which is grounded upon Ancient practice merely, though by no means conclusive, is yet of more weight in favor of Infant Baptism, than of Prelacy.

Here I am inclined to make a supposition similar to what I before made in regard to the Scripture argument,—a supposition that the facts in the case were different from what they are. Suppose then, that respectable writers among the Christian Fathers had given a testimony to the apostolic origin of Prelacy, like that which they have given against it. Suppose Chrysostom, instead of saying, that Presbyters were formerly called Bishops, and Bishops Presbyters, had just said, that Bishops from the beginning were superior to Presbyters. And suppose, that Theodoret, instead of saying; “those who were called Bishops, evidently held the rank of Presbyters,” had said, that Bishops evidently held a rank above Presbyters. And let me make one more supposition. Suppose that such a man as Jerome, instead of saying what I have quoted from his Annotations, had just said, that a Presbyter was *not* the same as a Bishop, and that, from the beginning, the churches were governed, *not* by Presbyters, but by a *Bishop*. And suppose he had said, *not* that a usage, after a while, gradually took place, but that it was a usage *from the first*, that the whole care of the churches devolved upon one, and that it was always the case, that one was chosen from among the Presbyters to be placed over the others.

And, instead of inculcating *humility* and *meekness* upon *Bishops* from the consideration, that they are above Presbyters rather by custom, then by the truth of the Lord's appointment, suppose he had inculcated *submission* upon *Presbyters*, from the consideration that Bishops were placed over them not merely by common custom, but by the Lord's appointment;—suppose that these and other ancient Fathers had thus given the very same testimony in favor of the Apostolic origin of Prelacy, as they actually gave against it; would not the advocates of Prelacy feel, that they were in possession of a new and glorious argument, and that all the world must acknowledge their cause to be founded upon a rock.

But I meet the argument from *early practice* in another way. Suppose then, that Prelacy was in fact introduced soon after the age of the Apostles, and was extended rapidly through the Christian world. It did unquestionably exist thus extensively in the fourth and fifth centuries. Suppose, if you will, that this was the case in the age immediately following that of the Apostles. My quest on is, how far and on what grounds the practice of uninspired men can bind us? Why should we feel ourselves obliged to adhere to a principle of order, which *they* set on foot? However near to the Apostles they may have lived, what claim have they to dictate to us, above what uninspired men have in modern times? The Apostles mourned over the ignorance, the superstition, the party spirit and strife, and various other corruptions, that appeared in the churches which they had planted, and even among the religious teachers who lived in their day; and they bore a solemn testimony against evils so prevalent, and so dishonorable to the character

of Christians. And can you think it is the will of God, that we should regard those as safe guides, who were so prone to corrupt the simplicity of the gospel, and to run into all sorts of disorder, as many of the churches of Asia did, even in the Apostolic age, and who thus incurred the most painful tokens of the divine displeasure? There were indeed faithful ministers and Christians. And such have been found in later times; and such are found at the present day. But does the piety and fidelity of ministers and Christians render them infallible, and authorize them to unsettle what the Apostles settled? Does it invest them with power to control our opinions or our practice? Are we to follow *them*, any farther than they followed Christ and the Apostles? And when we find uninspired men differ among themselves, as they always have done, especially in regard to church government; to which of them shall we submit? Some say, *to the most ancient,—to those who lived nearest to the Apostles*, and who were most likely to know what the mind of the Apostles was. But what special title had the most ancient Christians to dictate to those who should come after them? Were there not contentions, and errors, and corruptions among them? And why is it not just as proper and necessary for us to examine their opinions and practices, and to receive or reject them according as they agree or disagree with the word of God, as it is that we should treat the opinions and practices of modern Divines in this manner? Who will assert, that uninspired men in the primitive church,—men just recovered from the errors of Judaism, subject to so much ignorance and prejudice, and exposed to so many influences adverse to the purity of our religion,—who will assert that such

men in such circumstances, are entitled to our veneration and confidence, above the best men that have lived since the Reformation? If we were reduced to the necessity of following mere human guides,—uninspired teachers of religion; who of us would not prefer Calvin, Leighton and Scott, Howe, Edwards and Dwight, before Tertullian, Cyril and Origen, Chrysostom, Ambrose and Augustine?

The remarkable saying of Tertullian has been often repeated; “Whatever is *first* is *true*; whatever is *later* is *false*.” Look at this a moment. The traditions of the Jews, which made void the law of God, were “*first* ;” and Christ’s sermon on the mount was “*later*.” It may be said, the law of God was still “*first*,” and those traditions “*later*.” This I admit. And I say too, that the New Testament Scriptures were “*first*,” and the writings of the early Fathers “*later*.” The rule of Tertullian is sometimes right, and sometimes wrong, and of course cannot be relied upon. It is not a fact, that men were, in all cases, nearer to the truth, in proportion as they lived nearer to the time of the Apostles. Who will say, that the Catholic writers, who supported all the corruptions of the Church of Rome previously to the days of Luther, were nearer to the truth, than the great lights of the Reformed churches?

Some think, that those opinions and practices, in which *the Fathers all agreed*, must be supposed to correspond with the instructions of the Apostles. In regard to this, I remark, first, that the Fathers were all agreed on hardly any subject, certainly not on the subject now under consideration. But, secondly, if they had all been agreed, it would prove nothing to the purpose. For if



a few good men may agree in adopting a particular error, why may not many? We well know that the Fathers generally fell into palpable mistakes on moral and religious subjects. And can we set limits to the number of uninspired men, who, under the influence of their own imperfections, and of unpropitious outward circumstances, may fall into false opinions or wrong practices? We can never safely make it our rule to follow the multitude,—to believe what they believe, and to do what they do. If you could argue in favor of Prelacy, that it was universally adopted not only in the fourth, and the third, and the second century, but before the close of the first; I could by no means admit the validity of the argument, but should still maintain, that no agreement of *uninspired* men, unsupported by the Scriptures, can be obligatory on us. I must adhere steadfastly to the duty enjoined by Christ and his Apostles, to search the word of God, to receive the truths and conform to the directions there made known, and to reject all human traditions and inventions not conformed to it. In direct and everlasting opposition to the dogma of the Romish church, I hold that the Scriptures, by themselves, are, to all Christians, the sufficient and only authoritative rule of faith and practice.

But here you may ask, whether there was not such a *change of circumstances*, as justified the Fathers in departing from the instructions and the example of the Apostles. We have already considered this general question in relation to what is more commonly called *church discipline*. We are now to consider it in relation

to *different orders in the ministry, and the authority of the Prelate.*

The parity of ministers, which was established by the Apostles, must have been perfectly just and proper at the time ; because the Apostles were infallible. And it must be just and proper at all times, unless such circumstances occur, as plainly show it to be the will of God, that Prelacy should be introduced. Is it then a fact, that such circumstances have occurred ? And particularly, did they occur during the period when Prelacy was first introduced, that is, during one or two hundred years after the Apostolic age ? And was there at that time any sufficient reason for the change ?

The chief reason for establishing Prelacy, according to Jerome, and other Christian Fathers, was, that *divisions and disorders prevailed*, and it was thought these evils might be avoided by investing particular ministers with higher power, and making them *Overseers* or *Bishops*, not only over the churches, but *over other ministers*. Our inquiry is, whether this was a sufficient reason for the change.

Here then consider, that great divisions and irregularities early appeared in the churches which the Apostles planted, to which they wrote Epistles, and over which they extended their watchful care. This was specially the case in the Corinthian church. With what sorrow of heart did Paul notice the disorders which had crept into that church, or that cluster of churches ; and with what earnestness did he labor to put an end to them ! And he was so under the guidance of that wisdom which is from above, that he must have known what means would be best adapted to remove, and afterwards to prevent,

those hurtful disorders. Why did he not hit upon the expedient, which Episcopalians would instantly resort to in any such case? Why did he not plainly tell the Corinthians, that common ministers and the members of the church had too much concern in administering their affairs, and that, if they would keep things in order, they must have a *Bishop*, who should have power to rule over the churches, and over other ministers? There was, at that time, the very reason for introducing Prelacy, which has been considered most weighty. There could not have been a more favorable opportunity to make the change. The Apostle was alive, and had power to do the very thing which was called for. The reason for a more energetic government existed in all its strength; and the Apostle knew it. He told them in the way of solemn rebuke, that they were carnal; that there was envying, and strife, and divisions among them; that they were formed into parties, each party setting up its own favorite teacher; that there were enormous immoralities in the church; and that they were guilty of shocking irregularities, even while commemorating the death of Christ. The Apostle knew of all these disorders, and he knew what was the best way to remedy them, and to promote the welfare of the church. And it was the easiest thing in the world for the great Apostle to say, if he had only thought so;—*you have tried the principle of equality among ministers, and popular proceedings in the church, long enough. You cannot succeed, while there are so many concerned in the government. You must have a Bishop.* But the Apostle did not think so. Amid all his advices to the Corinthians, he did not advise to anything like this. He had seen what evils prevailed, and he clearly foresaw what

divisions and strifes would disturb and injure the churches after his decease. But so it was, that he never gave them the least hint in favor of Prelacy.

It may perhaps be alleged, that those disorders, which called for a change of government, afterwards increased in the church. Doubtless this was the case. And the Apostles knew it would be. And they were authorized to do whatever the order and prosperity of the church then required, and whatever it would require in time to come. It was perfectly within their province, as Apostles acting in the name of Christ, to give instructions for the use of Christians through all ages, to the end of the world. In many respects they actually did this. Why did they not say something in favor of Prelacy? If they saw that this was an establishment which would be called for in following ages, though not called for at that time; why did they not leave a direction to this effect,—that when circumstances should evidently require it, ministers and churches should introduce Prelacy, or, at least, should have *liberty* to do it?

The conclusion of the whole matter is, that the introduction of Prelacy, in times subsequent to the Apostles, was an innovation, wholly unauthorized,—a measure founded on reasons, which the Apostles themselves had fully considered, but which they did not regard as favoring such a change. The measure was, in my apprehension, adopted from the faulty inclination, so frequently found even in good men, to overlook the divine directions, and to think themselves able to improve the simple institutions of the New Testament.

The early Christian Fathers were certainly fallible. And one of the great mistakes which they appear to have



made in regard to the present subject, was, their supposing that the various evils which they wished to remedy, arose from some defect in the system of ecclesiastical order which was established by Christ and the Apostles. Had this really been the case; then some alteration in that system might have answered the purpose intended. But the dissensions, and party-strife, and other evils, which so widely prevailed, sprung from another and a very different source, that is, the corrupt inclinations of men. This is what we are expressly taught by the Apostle, who says to the Corinthian church with reference to this very subject; "ye are yet carnal;" that is, under the influence of corrupt, earthly affection. "For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions; are ye not carnal, and walk as men." It was this carnal, sinful state of Christians, not the want of a Bishop, which was the source of the evils complained of. Accordingly when the Apostle strives most earnestly to remedy these evils, he does not recommend any change whatever in the plan of Church Government which had been acted upon at Corinth. And you will observe that, instead of proposing that one church officer should be invested with authority over others, he really teaches the contrary. For he labors to make the impression, that the ministers of religion, even Paul and Apollos and Peter, are in themselves nothing, and can do nothing; that their success depends wholly on God; that they are all fellow-laborers and fellow-servants of Christ, and therefore that one of them should not be set up above others, as the object of admiration, or the head of a party. Instead of giving advice to the Corinthians, to put down their dissensions by establishing a superior order in the

ministry, and a more consolidated and efficient government in the church, he deals plainly and faithfully with their *hearts*, and tells them that the disorders of which he complains, originated *there*. The result of his teaching is, that the way to rid themselves of the hurtful evils existing among them, is, to subdue that *inward, spiritual evil* from which they spring.

Let not the lesson here taught, be forgotten. If any of you suppose, that the disorders which have existed and the unhappy events which have often taken place in the Puritan churches and among the Puritan ministers of New England, have sprung *chiefly*, or *in any considerable degree*, from defects in our plan of Church Government, and that a remedy may be found in the adoption of an essentially different plan; you have, in my apprehension, fallen into a great mistake. There may indeed be faults, as I doubt not there are, in our system of Ecclesiastical Polity, and these faults may have more or less augmented the evils complained of; and, in relation to this matter, the Head of the Church may call us to some special and important duties. But keep in mind, that the *principal* source of the evils lies in the faulty dispositions and characters of ministers and church members. Were ministers and Christians right,—did they bear the image of Christ, and abound in the fruits of the Spirit; they would honor God, and be peaceful, orderly and happy, although their form of government might be very imperfect. But if they are essentially wanting in these moral excellencies,—if, like Christians at Corinth, they are carnal, and walk as unsanctified men; evils will come. It is in vain to expect that, by any change in outward forms, and particularly by a change unauthor-

ized by the word of God, we can prevent those disorders, which arise from the inward corruptions of men professing godliness. Guard against so great a mistake. The Christian Fathers thought they could cure prevailing divisions and wicked practices among Christians by changing the form of church government, and by giving higher, and still higher authority to Bishops. But did they succeed? Did disorder and immorality subside? Or did they grow less from time to time, in proportion as the power of hierarchs was increased? How was it, when ecclesiastical government was most completely consolidated, and THE CHIEF BISHOP was invested with plenary authority, not only over churches and Priests, but over Kings and Emperors? When was it that moral evils, the most tremendous and desolating, overspread the nations of Christendom? And what was the actual result of the Prelatical scheme of Church Government, from its commencement and gradual spread in ages subsequent to the Apostles, to the period of its highest supremacy just before the Reformation? Prelacy, in various forms and degrees, certainly had a long and thorough trial. What was the result?

I have now examined the question, whether there were any sufficient reasons after the age of the Apostles, for departing from the simple plan of Church Government which prevailed in their day, and introducing the Episcopal scheme. The particular reason which induced the change, as stated by Jerome, was the existence of divisions and contentions in the churches. We have seen, that this very reason existed in its full strength, during the life of the Apostles, and was particularly considered and publicly noticed by the Apostle Paul; who,

however, looked upon those evils as arising, not from the want of Prelacy, but from the want of a right spirit among Christians; and who, of course, found in the existence of those evils, no reason for a change in the ecclesiastical polity which he had established. We have seen too that Prelacy, when introduced, did not answer the purpose intended; that under its influence the existing evils rather increased; and that, when its power came to its highest elevation, and the Bishop of Rome swayed the sceptre over all Europe, then it was that the most shocking enormities prevailed. We have considered that Prelacy in that line has had a fair trial, and has clearly shown what are its genuine fruits.

In my remarks on this point, I have been willing to admit, for the sake of argument, that Prelacy was introduced very early, that is, in the period immediately succeeding the Apostles. And the impression which I have aimed to make upon your minds, is, that those who succeeded the Apostles, being uninspired and fallible men, were not in any way authorized to make an essential change in the existing plan of Church Government, and that what was done on the subject, if it had really been done in the age next to that of the Apostles, and even by those who had seen the Apostles, cannot bind our consciences;—unless it can be shown,—which it cannot be,—that they received some instructions or some power to act on the subject, beyond what is recorded in the New Testament.

But I have for argument's sake, admitted more than is true. And I must here state it, as *another serious objection against Prelacy, that it does as really fail of being supported by the practice of the Primitive church*



*immediately following the Apostles, as by the Apostles themselves.*

If the Episcopal scheme had prevailed at that early period, it would seem, at first view, to furnish a plausible argument in its favor; as it might, with some show of reason, be alleged, that those Christians who lived at that time, and some of whom had even been personally acquainted with the Apostles, undoubtedly knew what the mind of the Apostles was, and were disposed, in all their proceedings, to conform to it. But it has been clearly shown by different writers, and acknowledged by many Episcopalians, that Prelacy has not the benefit of this argument. I have no time to go into a particular consideration of the merits of the case; and must content myself, according to a previous suggestion, with merely laying before you, in a few simple propositions, what I apprehend to be the fair results of the most learned, laborious, and candid investigation of the subject; referring you to the works in which the investigation is found in its best form.

1. No satisfactory proof can be derived from Ecclesiastical History, that Prelacy prevailed more or less during the first century. The Letters of Ignatius, it is well known, are of such doubtful authority, that they cannot be properly appealed to in this controversy. Clement's Letters, which are allowed to be genuine, and which were written near the close of the first century, contain evidence against the existence of Prelacy at that time. See quotations from Clement's Letters, in Coleman's Primitive Church, p. 164, 5.

2. There is no clear evidence that Prelacy prevailed, or began to prevail, during the first half of the second

century. The Fathers, who lived at that period, have left nothing that favors the idea that this was the case; and the writings of those who followed, contain much evidence to the contrary. The supposition of some Episcopalians, that the Apostles gave oral instructions, which are not recorded, but which were of divine authority, and were carried into effect by those who came after them, has nothing to support it, or to render it even probable. If there were any such instructions, who were the men that must have received them, and that must have remembered and executed them, except those who had a personal intercourse with the Apostles? But as it is evident that neither they nor their immediate successors did execute any such instructions; it is reasonable to conclude that the supposed instructions had not been received. For who would be willing to charge the early Fathers with neglecting, for fifty years, instructions which some of them had received, and which all of them knew had been received, from the lips of the Apostles? That the Apostles gave directions in favor of Prelacy, which were to remain unexecuted till a distant future time, is utterly incredible. But there is positive evidence, that during the first half of the second century it was as it had been before;—that the same officers, without distinction of rank, were called Bishops and Presbyters interchangeably, and that the members of the church had an important agency in disciplining offenders, and in managing other ecclesiastical affairs.

3. When Prelacy was introduced, in the latter part of the second or beginning of the third century, it was introduced very gradually. And for some time after Bishops began here and there to be distinguished above their

brethren, it was only a temporary or occasional distinction,—much like the distinction which is now conferred on those who are made Moderators or Presidents of ecclesiastical Assemblies,—those Bishops still having permanent oversight over single churches, not over a diocese, and claiming no exclusive right of ordination. There was nothing which had the essential features of what is now called Prelacy, for at least two hundred years after the commencement of the Christian era. And while modern Episcopalians can plead in defence of their scheme, the general practice of the church in the fourth and fifth and following centuries, they cannot plead that such a practice gained footing more or less in the *earliest* periods of the church. Accordingly, when they speak of *Primitive* practice as in their favor, they ought in justice to say, that they use the word *Primitive* with great latitude, and not as relating to any time previous to the latter part of the second or beginning of the third century. What is most properly called *Primitive*, they cannot claim.—When any man in New England says, that it was the *Primitive* practice of the Puritans to keep the Sabbath very strictly, and to take special pains for the literary and religious education of the young; is he not understood by every one to refer to their practice the first forty or fifty years after their arrival here? And should we not think him guilty of a great impropriety, if he should assert that this or that was the *Primitive* practice of the Puritans in New England, when there was no such practice for the first half century and more, and the practice spoken of was introduced gradually afterwards, and was a real innovation upon primitive usage, and a palpable departure from it?

*Primitive* practice is the *original* or *first* practice ; practice from the *beginning*. If any still think themselves warranted to say, that Prelacy was truly the *Primitive* practice, I prefer not to contend with them, but to leave them to settle the question with the most learned and impartial authors, ancient and modern, who have written on the subject.

The following are the principal works to which I must refer those, who wish to pursue the examination of the subject more particularly and fully, than I am able to do in these Lectures.

Jerome's Annotations on the Epistle to Titus. Neander's History of the Christian Church, and his Planting and Training of the Christian Church by the Apostles. Campbell's Lectures on Ecclesiastical History. Chauncy's View of Episcopacy. Enquiry into the Constitution of the Primitive Church, by Sir Peter King, Chancellor of England. Review of Essays on Episcopacy, by Dr. Mason in the Christian Magazine. Miller's Letters on the Constitution and Order of the Christian Ministry. Goode's Divine Rule of Faith and Practice, particularly vol. ii. Smyth on Presbytery and Prelacy. Barnes's Apostolic Church. Coleman's Primitive Church.

In this list you find two Episcopalians, King and Goode, both writers of distinguished reputation. As the last work abovementioned, by Rev. Lyman Coleman, will be issued from the press about the same time with these Lectures, and of course is not yet known to the public ; I would just say, that in my opinion, the work evinces excellent talents and scholarship, patient and thorough research, and entire fairness and impartiality. It was composed in the most favorable circumstances,



and comes forth with the special recommendation of Neander, one of the most distinguished Historians of this or any other age.

Before closing this Lecture, I shall take the liberty to make the following supposition. Suppose that those Episcopalians, who hold to the High Church principles, should find, on farther inquiry, that there is no clear evidence that Prelacy existed in the Apostolic age, or in the age following, and should be as fully convinced as Archbishop Whately and a multitude of other Episcopalians have been and are, that their doctrine of Apostolic Succession and the Divine Right of Prelacy, is destitute of proof,—suppose they should be well convinced of this, and should, like Whately and others, candidly admit it; would they, on that account, renounce Episcopacy? Would they not at once adopt the more moderate and rational principles which have governed a large part of ministers and a larger part of intelligent laymen in the Episcopal church, both in America and Great Britain? Now if this would be the case with High Churchmen, as I am confident it would be; then I should think they might safely relax their efforts a little in defending their peculiar and exclusive doctrines, seeing that those doctrines are not, even in their view, essential to the existence of their church, and seeing that, in the view of so many of their Episcopal brethren, and in the view of all Protestant Christians except themselves, their church can exist and prosper far better without those principles, than with them.



## LECTURE IV.

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THE next objection which I shall urge is against *what is involved in the Episcopal doctrine of Apostolic Succession*. I am aware that this doctrine, as now held by a considerable proportion of Episcopal ministers in England and America, that is, by those who are called the High Church party, is and has been rejected by another part. And I would here give you notice, that what I have to offer in opposition to this doctrine, and much that I have laid before you on other subjects, has no relation to those Episcopalians who dissent from this doctrine, and who adhere to the Episcopal church on other and more rational principles. My remarks here will lie against *the doctrine itself*; which I understand to be this; that the blessings of the Christian dispensation are restricted to the channel of a ministry Episcopally ordained; that no one is a true minister of the gospel, unless he has been duly ordained by a Bishop, duly consecrated by another Bishop, and he by another, and so on through an unbroken series of duly consecrated Bishops extending back to the Apostles; that no ministers who are not found in that line of succession, have been rightly ordained, or have a right to preach, or to administer the sacraments; that if non-Episcopal ministers undertake to preach and administer the sacraments, they assume what does not belong to them, and their

ministrations must be expected to prove inefficacious, as they have not received and cannot communicate the sacramental virtue; that whatever their intellectual and spiritual qualifications may be, they are not true Christian ministers; while those who have been Episcopally ordained are to be acknowledged as true ministers of Christ, however ignorant and wicked they may be.

There are some doctrines which are so extravagant, that the bare statement of them is, with all intelligent and unprejudiced persons, a sufficient confutation. And I think this doctrine is nearly of this character.

All that my limits will permit me to do in this place, is, to make some quotations from writers of the highest reputation, with a few remarks of my own.

“ Whether we consider the palpable absurdity of this doctrine, its utter destitution of historical evidence, or the outrage it implies on all Christian charity, it is equally revolting. The arguments against it are infinite; the evidence for it absolutely nothing. It rests not upon one doubtful assumption, but upon fifty.—First, the very basis on which it rests—the claim of Episcopacy itself to be considered undoubtedly and exclusively of Apostolical origin—has been most fiercely disputed by men of equal erudition and acuteness, and, so far as can be judged, of equal integrity and piety.—And one would think that the only lesson, which could or would be learned from the controversy, would be the duty of mutual charity, and a disposition to concede, that the blessings of Christianity are compatible with various systems of church polity. God forbid that we should for a moment admit that they are restricted to any one.—But this first proposition, however doubtful, is susceptible of evi-



dence almost demonstrative, compared with that offered for half a dozen others involved in the integral reception of the doctrine of Apostolical succession. Accordingly, there are thousands of Episcopalians, who, while they affirm a preponderance of evidence in favor of Episcopacy, contemptuously repudiate this incomprehensible dogma.—The theory is, that each Bishop, from the Apostolic times, has received in his consecration a mysterious “gift,” and also transmits to every Priest at his ordination a mysterious “gift,” indicated by the awful words, *Receive the Holy Ghost*; that on this the right of Priests to assume their functions, and the preternatural grace of the sacraments administered by them, depends; that Bishops, once consecrated, instantly become invested with the remarkable property of transmitting the “gift” to others;—that this high gift has been incorruptibly transmitted—from the primitive age till now—through the hands of impure, profligate and heretical ecclesiastics;—and that it is perfectly irrespective of the moral character and qualifications of both Bishop and Priest.”

“Numberless are the questions which reason and charity forthwith put to the advocates of this doctrine.—What is imparted? What transmitted?—Is consecration or ordination accompanied, (as in primitive times,) by miraculous powers, by any invigoration of intellect, by increase of knowledge, by greater purity of heart? It is not pretended: and if it were, facts contradict it, as all history testifies. The ecclesiastic who is ignorant or impure before ordination, is just as much so afterwards.—Do the parties themselves profess to be *conscious* of receiving the gift? No. Is the conveyance made evident to us by any proof which certifies any fact whatso-

ever, by sense, experience, or consciousness? It is not affirmed. In a word, it appears to be a nonentity inscribed with a very formidable name,—a very substantial shadow.”

“ Again, who can certify that this gift has been incorruptibly transmitted through the impurities, heresies and ignorance of the dark ages? Is there nothing that can invalidate Orders?—The chances are infinite that there have been flaws somewhere or other in the long chain of succession; and—as no one knows where the fatal breach may have been, it is sufficient to spread universal panic through the whole church. What Bishop can be sure that he and his predecessors in the same line have always been duly consecrated? or what Presbyter, that he was ordained by a Bishop who had a right to ordain?”

——“ But the difficulties do not end here. It is asked, how a man who is no true Christian, can be a true Christian minister;—how he, who is not even a disciple of Christ, can be a genuine successor of the Apostles.”

“ But—will Christians be content to receive this strange doctrine? Are they willing to sacrifice even charity itself to an absurdity? Powerful as are the arguments on all hands against this paradox, none is so powerful with us as this.—We *feel* that if there were nothing else to say, there is no proposition more certain, than that a dogma, which consigns the Lutheran, the Scottish, and indeed the whole reformed non-Episcopal clergy to contempt, *however holy*, and which authenticates the claims of every Episcopal Priest, *however unholy*,—must be utterly alien from the spirit of the New Testament.”\*

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\* See Edinburgh Review, 1843, On Puseyism, or, the Oxford Tractarian School.

“Since the first century, not less, in all probability, than a hundred thousand persons have exercised the functions of Bishops. That many of these have not been Bishops by Apostolic succession, is quite certain. Hooker admits that deviations from the general rule have been frequent, and, with a boldness worthy of his high and statesman-like intellect, pronounces them to have been often justifiable.”\*

The doctrine of Apostolical succession is overthrown by the clear and abundant evidence which we have from the early Fathers, that ordination was performed by Presbyters. Any one who wishes to be acquainted with this evidence in its details, may consult Goode's Divine Rule, vol. ii. Coleman's work on the Constitution and Worship of the Apostolical and Primitive Church, Smyth's Presbytery and Prelacy, and other well known works.

That there may be lawful ordinations by Presbyters without a Bishop is conceded and maintained by many Episcopalians, and those of the first respectability. Hooker gives it as his decided opinion, “that there may be sometimes very just and sufficient reason to allow ordinations made without a Bishop.”

Archbishop Whately, a man of distinguished talents, learning, and integrity, and sustaining the highest office in the Episcopal church, after a thorough examination of the doctrine of Apostolic succession, comes to the conclusion, that it is destitute of satisfactory proof.

He says: “If a man consider it as highly *probable* that the *particular minister* at whose hands he receives

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\* See Edinburgh Review for 1839, On Church and State.

the sacred ordinances, is really apostolically descended, *this* is the very utmost point to which he can, with any semblance of reason, attain: and the more he reflects and inquires, the more cause for hesitation will he find. There is not a minister in Christendom who is able to trace up with any approach to certainty his own spiritual pedigree.”——“If a Bishop has not been duly consecrated——his ordinations are null; and so are the ministrations of those ordained by him,——and so on without end. The poisonous taint of informality, if it once creep in undetected, will spread the infection of nullity to an indefinite extent.—And who can pronounce that during the—dark ages, no such taint was ever introduced? Irregularities could not have been wholly excluded without a perpetual miracle. Amidst the numerous corruptions of doctrine and of practice, and gross superstitions, that crept in—we find descriptions not only of the profound ignorance and profligacy of many of the clergy, but of the grossest irregularities in respect of discipline and form. We read of Bishops consecrated when mere children;—of men officiating who barely knew their letters;—of Prelates expelled, and others put in their place, by violence;—of illiterate and profligate laymen and habitual drunkards, admitted to holy orders;—and in short, of the prevalence of every kind of disorder and indecency. It is inconceivable that any one, even moderately acquainted with history, can feel—any approach to certainty, that amidst all this confusion and corruption, every requisite form was, in every instance, strictly adhered to;——and that no one not duly consecrated or ordained, was admitted to sacred offices.

“The ultimate consequence must be, that any one



who sincerely believes that his claim to the benefits of the gospel covenant depends on his own minister's claim to the supposed sacramental virtue of true ordination, and this again, on perfect Apostolical succession,—must be involved, in proportion as he reads, and inquires, and reflects on the subject, in the most distressing doubt and perplexity." The whole work of Whately on the Kingdom of Christ is worthy of the most attentive perusal.

Archbishop Usher, one of the brightest ornaments of the Episcopal Church, affirmed, that in ancient times Presbyters alone successively ordained even Bishops. And he said, he honored the non-Episcopal churches of Europe as true members of the church universal, and should readily receive the Sacrament at the hands of Dutch ministers, if he were in Holland. Bishop Stillingfleet says: "It was acknowledged by the stoutest champions of Episcopacy, before these late unhappy divisions, that ordination performed by Presbyters in case of necessity, is valid." Sir Peter King says, he finds clearer proofs of Presbyters *ordaining*, in the early church, than of their administering the Lord's supper. I might multiply testimonies of like kind from Episcopalians almost without end. But it is sufficient for my purpose to give you a few specimens.

I have one remark of my own to add. The Apostle Paul in his Epistle to Timothy and Titus, gives a very particular description of what he regards as essential qualifications of a Bishop. But he makes no mention of the circumstance of his being duly ordained. My remark is, that had he attached such consequence to this circumstance, as many do at this day, it is not probable he would have passed it in silence. In this and in every

other instance he showed, that his mind was intent upon *important realities*, and not upon *outward forms*. It is indeed said, in order to show the importance of outward, visible forms and rites, that man must have a *body* as well as a spirit. I agree to this. But we must take care to let the body be as God has made it, never attempting to add to it, or in any way to alter it. If true spiritual religion is to be *embodied* in outward forms and ceremonies, let those forms and ceremonies be as God in the New Testament appointed them to be. This visible body of internal, invisible Christianity, when not misshapen or made monstrous by man's contrivances, is a fit companion and help to the spirit.

I must now refer this doctrine of Apostolical succession to your own free consideration; only expressing my conviction, that the doctrine understood in that high and exclusive sense in which I have here considered it, though held very tenaciously by many at the present time, will, by its extravagance and uncharitableness, occasion reproach and injury to the cause of Episcopacy, and will, for that and other reasons, be gradually, and, in the end, entirely abandoned by *Protestant* Episcopalians,—retaining its seat only where it properly belongs.

I cannot leave the present topic without adverting to the general question of *divine appointment* and *divine authority*, in regard to the gospel ministry. Let me say then, that Presbyterians and Congregationalists hold as much as Episcopalians, that *the gospel ministry* is appointed of God, and derives all its authority ultimately from God, not from man. But it is here as in other cases, that God's appointment is ordinarily carried into effect and his government administered, through the agen-

cy of man. We see it to be so in the general movements of divine providence. But it would be culpable presumption in us to decide, that the manner in which God executes his appointments is and must be always the same. In his infinite wisdom, he chooses a variety of methods, always adapting them to circumstances, and to the ends which he had in view. Under the former dispensation, he gave Prophets to his people in ways suited to the purposes intended. At the beginning of the new dispensation, he gave Apostles to be witnesses of the miracles of Christ, preachers of his gospel, the first founders of Christian churches, etc., and he gave them in a manner adapted to those objects. But even here, the manner was not the same. Matthias was chosen in a way different from the other eleven, and Paul in a way different from any of the twelve. But the age of miracles has ceased, and the divine appointment is now executed in the ordinary course of Providence. The essential qualifications of ministers are pointed out by an inspired Apostle, but not the particular manner in which they shall come into the sacred office. If ministers possess the qualifications required, and are inducted into the ministry in a regular and becoming manner, and do the duties of the office faithfully, they are *God's ministers*, and he *truly gives* them for the good of his church, whether he brings them into the office in one way or another. Faithful ministers in the *Episcopal* church are doubtless God's gift, and Christians should thank him for them, and receive them as such. And many and precious have been these gifts, and precious the blessings resulting from them. And are not ministers in the Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist and Metho-

dist churches equally God's gift? And should not Christians, particularly those who have received spiritual profit under their ministry, thank God for them, and for all the blessings resulting from their pious labors? Whatever may be the particular mode of proceeding among men in introducing well qualified and faithful ministers into the sacred office; they are there *by divine appointment*. They are God's ministers; and he owns them and blesses them as such. And they have equally a divine right to perform all the duties of the ministerial office.

The principle which I maintain may be illustrated by a particular reference to civil government. The Bible teaches as plainly and expressly, that civil rulers are *ministers of God, and divinely appointed*, as that preachers of the gospel and pastors of churches are so. Moses, and Samuel, and Saul, and David, were set apart to their office as rulers, by a *special* and *miraculous* divine interposition. Afterwards the office of chief ruler or king became hereditary; and those who held the office on the ground of hereditary right were lawful kings, and were divinely appointed. But observe, that when Nebuchadnezzar, the wicked king of Babylon, conquered the Jews and acquired dominion over them, the Prophet Jeremiah exhorted and commanded them to "serve the king of Babylon," and rebuked the false prophets who endeavoured to persuade them not to serve him. Nebuchadnezzar was then the divinely appointed ruler of the Jews;—God sent him to reign over them, and it was their duty to submit to him as "the ordinance of God;" and obedience to him became obedience to God. Even when the Jews returned from their captivity, their



rulers were indebted for their authority to Cyrus and his successors. Now pass over the various events which occurred in the Jewish nation, and come down to the time of Christ and the Apostles. Through the arrangements of a just and sovereign Providence, the supreme government had passed into the hands of the Romans, and Cæsar was the king of the Jewish nation. But he came to be so, not by any *supernatural* or *special divine designation*, but by the very ambiguous right of conquest and superior power. It was however a wise and righteous God, that shaped the concerns of both these nations, and, by his overruling providence, subjected the Jews to the Roman power. And whatever may be said of the means by which the Romans brought the Jews into subjection, or of the way in which Cæsar came to have authority over them; yet as, under divine Providence, he actually possessed that authority, and was the king of the Jews, Jesus recognized that authority and submitted to it, and inculcated the duty of obedience upon his disciples. The Apostles did the same. The rulers whom they acknowledged as the ministers of God, and whom Christians were to honor and obey, were generally wicked, tyrannical and cruel men. But the Apostles considered them as appointed and sent of God to fill the office of rulers. The language of Paul, Rom. xiii, is very plain. He calls rulers,—and such as were then in office,—“the higher powers;” and says they are “of God,”—“ordained of God,”—“the ordinance of God,” and “ministers of God;” and requires Christians to be subject to them “for conscience’ sake,” i. e. as a duty to God.

Follow now the history of the Roman Empire. See

how it was rent asunder by factions and revolutions from one century to another, and divided and subdivided into a great number of smaller kingdoms or states, each one having its own ruler, and generally on the ground of hereditary right.—Come at length to the British nation, where the same principle of hereditary power was adopted. But what changes, what revolutions, what struggles for power, what wars and fightings took place. But whoever was the king, and however he came to be so, *he* was “*the minister of God*,” and was made so by the arrangements of his all-controlling providence; and he was divinely designated to his office, as *really*, though not in the same manner, as David was. You finally reach our own country, where, in consequence of a great insurrection and a successful war against the British Government, to which we had for a long time been in lawful subjection, a revolution was effected, and we became an independent Republic; and casting off the British authority, we established a government and elected rulers in our own way. But our Governours and Presidents and Judges are all “ministers of God;” and government in our Republican form is as much *a divine institution*, as in the Kingly or Imperial form; an *elective* Government, as much as a *hereditary* Government. Episcopalians fully recognize this principle, and, in their 37th Article, expressly affirm the duty of “a respectful obedience to the civil authority, regularly and legitimately constituted.” They do not mean that a civil authority, in order to be legitimate, must be *monarchical*, or *hereditary*, or must be constituted *in any one particular way*. They acknowledge the legitimate authority of our Republican Rulers, *just as they are*, and have altered

the English prayer for the King into an American prayer for the President ; and in all respects they conduct themselves as faithful subjects of our Republican Government. But if our Government should again be changed, and should go back to what it was ; if by some strange movements in our public affairs, it should come to pass, that the King of Great Britain should be our King, and we should be under a hereditary Monarch, and a House of Lords containing the Noblemen and the Bishops, and our King should be consecrated to his office by the Archbishop of Canterbury ; American Episcopalians, though born Republicans, would, like other peaceable citizens, readily submit to that Government, though it it would be somewhat new to them, and they would restore the Liturgy to its original form, so that they might offer up prayer for the King and Queen and the Royal Family, and the Parliament. And if after a while there should be still another revolution, and another Oliver Cromwell should come to be established as our chief Ruler and Protector ; I suppose Episcopalians would still be subject to “ the powers that be,” and would pray for the LORD PROTECTOR, however much he might be like Oliver Cromwell, just as they now do for the PRESIDENT. Episcopalians, I mean to say, are wise and prudent men and good citizens, and hold to sound, Bible-principles in regard to civil Government ;—which is as truly an ordinance of God, and is as expressly declared by Scripture to be so, as the gospel ministry.

In this way I think we may get a just idea of the *principle of succession*,—succession not as an abstract thing, but as a *reality*, a *matter of fact*. There has been a *succession* of *Rulers* in the different nations of Europe, how

many soever may have been the interruptions and changes in the order of that succession. So in these United States. Have we not, from the beginning of the settlements in this country, had a succession of Rulers? For a long time our Chief Ruler was the King of Great Britain. GEORGE THE THIRD was the last. He was the *Predecessor* of GEORGE WASHINGTON. There was indeed a time when no one man was chief Ruler of all these States,—although they were in some important respects, under the authority of the Old Congress. But at length the Federal Union was formed, and then Washington became our *Chief Magistrate*, as truly as George the Third had been before him. Accordingly, as Chief Ruler of all these States, WASHINGTON was the real *successor* of GEORGE THE THIRD. As *Chief Ruler* he followed next after *George the Third*,—who was our last Chief Ruler before Washington. Thus these American States have had from the beginning to the present time, a succession of Rulers,—a *real* succession, though not an *unvaried* succession, and not an *unbroken* succession; a succession of Rulers invested with their office in different ways, but all “ordained of God,” and all to be acknowledged as *his gift*, as much as though they had been called to their office as Moses or David was. No man in our Republic can be President or Senator, Governour or Judge, unless he is regularly brought into office *according to our Republican Constitution and Laws*. But when he is thus regularly brought into office, is he not a lawful ruler, and invested with a just authority? And does not God give Rulers in this way as truly as in any other? Is God’s Providence shut up to one way? Is not a Republican Government founded on divine



right, as much as an hereditary monarchy? Is it a fact, that the King of Great Britain or any of the Governments of Europe stand off and refuse to acknowledge our government and to have fellowship with it, and deny the validity of its acts, because it is *Republican*? And do *we* refuse fellowship with the governments of Europe, because they are *Monarchical* or *Imperial*? No. Men have sense enough to manage these matters properly in civil concerns. Any civil officer is acknowledged and respected not only in his own country, *but in other countries*, if he has been put into the office in conformity with *the laws of his own country*, how much soever those laws may differ from the laws of other countries.

Now I verily think that Christian Ministers and churches of different countries, and different forms of government, should have as much good sense, and, enlargedness of mind, and charity, as the officers and members of civil communities. The different denominations of Christians have each their order, their rules of proceeding, in regard to the formation of churches and the ordination of ministers,—all of them alike regarding the church and the ministry as divine institutions. Their rules of proceeding may not be perfectly wise and proper, and scriptural, in the view of each other, or in their own view. But they all have *order of some kind*. Now if churches or ministers have the essential moral qualifications prescribed in the word of God, and conform to the rules of order in their own denomination; that is, if Richard Cecil and John Newton and their churches conform to the rules of the Episcopal denomination, and Andrew Fuller and Robert Hall and their churches conform to the rules of the Baptist denomination, and Tim-

othy Dwight and Edward Payson and their churches, to the rules of the Congregational denomination, and Samuel Davies and John H. Rice and their churches, to the rules of the Presbyterian denomination, and Wilber Fisk and John Summerfield and their churches, to the rules of the Methodist denomination,—assuming that these denominations do all hold the essential truths and obey the essential laws of the gospel, and have severally their rules of order;—then I say, all these ministers and churches are to be acknowledged and treated by each other as true Christian ministers and churches. And if any one stands off from others merely because they differ from him in outward forms; does he not contradict the scripture principle which he acknowledges relative to the divine institution of civil government? Does he not set up outward forms above inward piety and charity;—forgetting that the kingdom of Christ consisteth not in meats and drinks, or in tithing mint, anise and cumin, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?—As to rules of order—I would insist upon them as strenuously as any man;—not indeed *exclusively* upon the order established in my own denomination; but upon *order in some way, and its appropriate rules*. If a man calls himself a Presbyterian minister, or a Baptist minister, or an Episcopal minister, and yet has not conformed to the order established in his own denomination, and has not a regular and honorable standing there; I cannot receive him in the character he assumes, any more than I can receive one as a Congregational minister, if he despises or neglects Congregational order. Congregationalists as well as other non-Episcopal denominations have *rules of order*—not Episcopal rules—but rules which are intend-

ed and in some measure adapted to secure good order. Our rules may need mending, as much as the Episcopal rules do;—if you please, even more. Still they are *rules*. And good order is promoted more by a strict observance of *imperfect* rules, than by a negligent, partial observance of those which are more perfect. Let us then be always on the side of the *principle of order*, not, I say, *in any one form exclusively*,—this would be illiberal and narrow,—but in the several forms in which it is found among good men. Let us stand up, firmly and honorably, without bigotry or party spirit, as zealously in behalf of our brethren of other names, as in our own behalf, for *the principle of order*; endeavouring, with a noble liberality, to promote the peace and prosperity of every part of the spiritual kingdom of Christ. Thus let us aim to feel and act, in some humble measure, as He does, who is Head over all things to the church, and who looks upon all the branches of it with equal kindness, and upon all that is holy in his redeemed people of whatever name, with equal complacency.

I now come to another view of the subject which I have undertaken to discuss. There are Episcopalians in large numbers, and of great excellence of character, who discard the doctrine of Apostolical succession in the peculiar and exclusive sense in which it is held by the High Church party, and who adopt the Episcopal scheme of church polity on the ground of *expediency*. They think that the particular form of Church Government, not being marked out by the Scriptures, is to be determined by Christians in the exercise of their own sober judgment and discretion. It is the opinion of those I refer

to, that the Episcopal plan is *consistent* with Scripture, and taken as a whole is preferable to any other plan ;— that it avoids many evils to which other ecclesiastical modes are subject, and secures many advantages of which they are deprived.

I shall now, therefore, go into an inquiry somewhat particular, in regard to the *expediency* of our adopting the Episcopal system. The particular form of worship and of government in the Episcopal church, and in other churches, is now to be considered as a *human arrangement*. And, while we hold it to be proper for Episcopalians, so long as they continue in the Episcopal church, to conform to its rules,—and while we consider it to be our sacred duty to submit reverently and devoutly to whatever is enjoined upon us by divine authority ; we feel at liberty to call in question whatever is of human origin, and to receive or reject it, according as we find reasons for or against it. The simple question, therefore, which we are now to consider, is, whether it is expedient for us, who are connected with other denominations of Christians, to change our relations, and adopt the Episcopal scheme. We are all at liberty to do this, if we judge best. The doors of the Episcopal church are open, and her Bishops and Priests are ready to receive us, and to grant us her privileges and blessings. Let us then fairly examine the subject on the ground now proposed. The Episcopal form of worship and church government, as it exists in America, is, in my judgment, better than what is found elsewhere. Let this form of Episcopacy be the subject of our careful consideration. It is, I suppose, in this form, if in any, that we are to



fall in with it;—unless some of us should chance to feel its attractions in its Romish form.

Here we are to look at the whole state of the Episcopal church in its best form,—its ministers, its members, its worship, its ordinances, its rites and ceremonies, everything which makes a part of the system now in operation. It is a subject of serious moment. In the investigation of it, I would cherish a hearty veneration and love for whatever is stamped with truth and dignity and excellence in the Episcopal church. At the same time I shall look upon myself as having a perfect right, as every other man has, to make inquiries, and to think, and examine, and deliberate, and judge for myself, provided I do it in the fear of God, and with charity towards my fellow men. And I will thank and honor any man, who will go into a similar examination of the system which I have adopted, and will faithfully point out its deficiencies and its errors.

In the first place, I turn my attention to what is a prominent object in the Episcopal church, as it is in every other church,—I mean its *ministers*. And in endeavouring to satisfy myself whether that church has a fair title to be preferred before churches under other forms, I am under the necessity of inquiring, not whether Episcopal ministers at large are good men and faithful ministers, but whether they are *better* than *others*. If, as the claim of some is, they are *God's true ministers, specially and exclusively*;—if at their ordination, they do in fact, through the ministration of the Bishop, receive the Holy Ghost in a sense in which ministers who are ordained in other forms, do not receive that heavenly gift; it is certainly reasonable to expect, that they will excel other

ministers in those intellectual and moral excellencies which the sacred office requires, and in the fidelity and success of their labors in that office. Otherwise, their standing in that peculiar relation to God, and their being thus endued with the ineffable gift of the Holy Ghost, would seem to be of no value. Are then the Episcopal clergy, as a body, possessed of higher qualifications than other ministers? Do they more completely sustain the character of a bishop or elder, as drawn by an Apostle? Are they more diligent and faithful in the duties of their calling, or more fervent in prayer? Have they a more visible likeness to him who went about doing good, and who was meek and lowly in heart? Are they more sound in the faith? Do they contend more earnestly for the essential doctrines of the Gospel? Do they more earnestly preach Christ crucified, and more fully make known his unsearchable riches? Do they exhibit more zeal to spread the word of God, to evangelize the heathen, and convert the world? Or do they make greater efforts and sacrifices to promote good institutions at home, and to advance the cause of learning and morality? For the last fifty, or the last hundred or two hundred years, have the Episcopal clergy in our country been superior, in any of the abovementioned respects, to Congregational or Presbyterian ministers? Cast your eye over Massachusetts and other parts of New England from its first settlement to the present time, and compare the three orders of the Episcopal clergy with Congregational ministers, and see whether the former have possessed higher ministerial excellencies, than the latter; or whether they have enjoyed more visible tokens of the divine approbation; or whether the substantial interests

of religion have been more promoted by their labors? I do not by any means undervalue the worth of their characters, or the usefulness of their labors. I only ask whether they have been superior to others. And then, in conclusion, I ask, whether, in this respect, we have any substantial reason to change our ground; and whether, if we should change, and go over to Episcopalians, we should have a prospect of being connected with a better company of ministerial brethren.

Pass then from the ministry to the churches, and, keeping in mind that churches, as well as individuals, are known by their fruits,—inquire, whether those of the Episcopal order are entitled to more confidence and honor, than those of other denominations. Do the members of Episcopal churches exhibit more clear and satisfactory evidence of piety? Are higher qualifications required of persons who are admitted to the fellowship of the church and the Sacrament of the Supper? Do Episcopal churches maintain a more vigilant inspection, and more faithful discipline over their members? Do they show a more devout regard to the Christian Sabbath, and do they give a more constant and reverent attendance on public worship? Have professors of religion among them less of a worldly spirit, than others? Are they less devoted to fashion and vain amusements? Have they a higher degree of domestic and personal godliness? Go from church to church, and from house to house, and from closet to closet, and see whether you find more abundant fruits of the Spirit, more of pure and undefiled religion?

Now if neither ministers, nor churches, nor individual Christians of the Episcopal denomination, however excel-

lent they may be, are found to be no more excellent than those of other denominations ;—if Prelacy, after time for a fair trial, appears to have contributed nothing above other forms of church government, to the spiritual benefit of ministers or churches, or private Christians ; then, in these respects, there seems to be no valid reason, why we should give up the Ecclesiastical system which was held by our Puritan Fathers, and which we think existed in the churches in the time of the Apostles, and adopt the system of Prelacy. If, generally, the government of the church by Diocesan Bishops has been attended with no obvious benefits to any class of men, above other forms of government ; then, so far as the principle of *expediency* is concerned, what cause have we to give the preference to the Episcopal form ? And what shall we say of those Episcopalians, who maintain, that their church is the only true church of Christ, and that their ministers are the only ministers who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit to qualify them for their office, and that their ordinances are the only ordinances which are valid, or which can secure the blessing of God ; while yet there is seen among them no degree of spiritual health, or spiritual activity, above what is seen among those, who, according to *their* ideas, have no share in these invaluable and indispensable blessings ? I cannot but ask, why we should go over to another denomination, to obtain benefits, which after all prove to be no benefits ?

I have, you see, begun to tell you frankly what my way of thinking is on the general subject before us in respect to *expediency*. But I cannot stop here. Justice to the Puritan Fathers of New England, and to



the Founders of this Seminary, and to the great majority of Protestant Christians, and to my own deliberate convictions, requires me to say, not only that I see no reasons in favor of Episcopacy in comparison with other Ecclesiastical forms, but various reasons against it. These reasons I shall now lay before you.

I have already endeavoured to show, that Prelacy is a departure from the Apostolic institution,—a departure without sufficient reasons, and, on the whole, without favorable results. I now allege, as my *first objection against Prelacy on the particular ground of expediency*, that *it introduces into the Christian church a principle of hurtful tendency ; namely, a distinction in regard to office and rank among the ministers of Christ*. Were this distinction of divine authority, we should be under obligation quietly to submit to it, and to confide in that divine wisdom which appointed it. But being, as I apprehend, a human invention, an ordinance of man, we are not only permitted but bound in duty to inquire, whether the distinction is of such a nature and tendency, as to justify us in adopting it. Now there is evidently no foundation for this distinction in the characters or qualifications of gospel ministers. Those who are made Bishops are not superior to all Presbyters. The elevation of some above others is not grounded on their superior qualifications. There would be a Bishop, though no one could be chosen, who was superior to common Presbyters. Inquire then whether there is any reason for the distinction, in the nature of the work to be done ? I think not. For all, if properly qualified, are able to preach the gospel, administer the ordinances, and preside in the church ;—Presbyters as well as those who

are called Bishops. And as to the work of ordaining ;— why is not a Presbytery, that is, a body of Presbyters, as competent to set apart others to the same office by prayer and the laying on of hands, as a Bishop is ? Now as this distinction is made without any obvious reason,—as it is not required by the nature of the work to be done, and so is arbitrary ; it tends, as every such distinction does, to beget pride and self-complacency in those who are raised to the superior rank. Some of the Apostles, with the meek and lowly Jesus before their eyes, had ambition enough in their hearts to aspire after a higher office, than others were to occupy. But Jesus told them, and their fellow Apostles, that there *was no such office* in his kingdom ;—that they were all brethren. And why should we create an office, which is suited to be an object of desire to aspiring minds ? Is there not as much unhallowed ambition latent in the hearts of ministers at the present day, as there was in the hearts of John and James ? And is it worth the while, unnecessarily to create a place of distinction, which will be likely to excite that unhallowed principle to a perilous activity ?

But this is not all. So far as one portion of the clergy are, in point of rank and power, raised above the proper level, the other part are sunk below it. This follows of course. And it is a plain matter of fact, that the order of things in the Episcopal Church thrusts the inferior clergy down from their proper station, deprives them of a part of their just rights, and hinders them from performing a part of the duties incumbent upon all the ministers of Christ. According to the word of God, they are all *rulers* in the Church, *under Christ*, the Supreme Ruler. Their being under HIM is no de-

gradation, but an honor ;—no loss of rights, but a matter of truth and justice, yea, an unspeakable privilege. But for them to be subjected to an unnecessary human authority is a loss of just rights, and a hinderance to the performance of important duties ; and it is a degradation. It is the right and duty of every gospel minister, not only to administer Baptism, but to admit persons to the communion of the church and to the participation of the Lord's Supper. And if Confirmation is a Scriptural rite, and is ordinarily to precede or accompany admission to these privileges ; then Confirmation is a part of the duty belonging to every minister. And to take it out of the hands of common Pastors, and put it into the hands of a Prelate, is as arbitrary and unjust, as it would be to put the right of *baptizing* exclusively into his hands. What is there in the business of *Confirming*, as set forth in the "Book of Common Prayer," which is more solemn, or more important, or of more difficult performance, than Baptism ? And yet, in the Episcopal church, while a Presbyterian baptizes children, and adult believers, he cannot Confirm them. This must be done by a Bishop. Why so ? In the rite of Confirmation, persons do but recognize and renew the obligations implied in Baptism. If either is the more important, surely it is Baptism. And any one would naturally think that, if either of them is to be deemed of superior importance, and, on that account, to be assigned exclusively to the Bishop, it must be Baptism, which is plainly a *divine* institution, rather than Confirmation, which looks very much like a *human* institution. And when I compare Confirmation with the *Lord's Supper*, I find equal, if not superior reason to regard the latter as the more

solemn and important. Why then is an ordinary Pastor who is allowed to administer the Lord's Supper, forbidden to administer the rite of Confirmation? If the less important duty is assigned exclusively to the Bishop; why not the more important? Why is it not made the duty of the Bishop, and of him only, to administer the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper? And for the same reason, why should he not do all the preaching too, as this is vastly more important and difficult, than the work of Confirmation? In regard then to Confirmation, is there not in the Episcopal system, an appearance of something which is unreasonable and arbitrary, and, to common ministers, degrading? The same may be said in regard to the right and the duty of consecrating men to the office of ministers, by prayer and the imposition of hands;—a transaction to which Presbyters are as competent as Bishops. We are now looking at these matters as being referred to the discretion of Christians, and to be disposed of on the ground of *expediency*. And my position is, that, so far as the Episcopal system deprives Presbyters of any rights which naturally pertain to their office, such as the right of Confirming and Ordaining, and so far as it hinders them from the performance of any ministerial duties, to which they are manifestly competent; it degrades them in the public estimation, and, by an unnecessary and arbitrary arrangement, curtails their salutary influence and their usefulness. I shall feel myself justified in making these allegations, until it shall be shown, that the assignment of duties referred to, is founded on sufficient reasons, and is dictated by sound judgment and discretion. Until that is done, my objec-



tion against Episcopacy, as stated above, remains in all its force. And every time a Bishop goes about among the churches, claiming and exercising the exclusive right of *Confirming* and *Ordaining*, I shall have the disagreeable impression, that he goes, not simply to advise, assist and encourage common Pastors in their holy calling, but to interfere with some of their appropriate rights and duties, as ministers of Christ. The fault, however, is not to be charged to the Episcopal *Bishop*, but to the Episcopal *system*.

It is, in my view, a serious objection against the system of Prelacy, that *it hinders the members of the church from performing an important part of their duty as Christians*. We have seen that it deprives them of all direct agency in the discipline of offenders. In this way, it tends to prevent them from feeling the interest which they ought to feel in the character and conduct of each other, and, of course, from exercising the watchful care over each other, which is required as a sacred duty. To induce men to do such a duty, and to do it faithfully, it is important to take away all hinderances, and to make them feel the force of a *direct responsibility*. Any sincere Christian will be likely to watch over his brethren for their good, and to reprove them when the case requires, and labor for their amendment, if it is understood, that this is a duty which properly belongs to him, and that his brethren are, in an important sense, accountable to him. But how can we expect that individual Christians will faithfully watch over and reprove one another, as required by the precepts of Scripture, and that the business of real superintendence and discipline will be faithfully accomplished, if it all devolves on a single man,

and that man at a distance, occupied with a multitude of other cares, and not likely to be sufficiently acquainted with the persons concerned to be a suitable judge? I think there ought at least to be something which fairly answers to *trial by jury*, which in Great Britain and America is deemed so indispensable to the security of individual rights, and the exercise of justice. Let every private member of the church be tried and judged either by his brethren regularly assembled as a judicial body, or if the brethren think best, by their *representatives*, chosen and authorized to act for them,—as is done in the Presbyterian church. This last is truly a Republican proceeding; and it recognizes the principle, that it is the right and duty of the members of the church to attend to the business of discipline, although they choose to do it, as the members of our civil communities do, by or through their *representatives*, to whom they delegate the necessary power. Where the members of the church are possessed of intelligence and judgment, qualifying them to have a direct, personal agency in managing the discipline of the church, the *Congregational* plan is, in my opinion, preferable, and more exactly in accordance with the primitive practice. But still, as in civil society, no one can complain, if he is tried by his peers, those peers being chosen in a just and orderly manner; so in the church, substantial and equal justice may be secured, if the business of discipline is voluntarily committed by the members to a proper number of *representatives*, constituting a body in the church with definite, but delegated power in the affairs of discipline. Now either the Congregational or Presbyterian system appears to me altogether preferable to the Episcopal system, accord-

ing to which the Bishop is entrusted with the exercise of a superintendence and discipline which is far too extensive for any single man, and for which no man can be supposed to possess the necessary knowledge and the necessary executive ability. And, if I mistake not, all experience will show, that wherever Prelacy prevails, that is, wherever the business of discipline is taken out of the hands of *the churches*, and committed to the hands of a single man, who is to take care of a large number of churches, spread over a large extent of country; the duty will not and cannot be faithfully performed. The system in this respect is encumbered with great disadvantages, and it imposes upon the Bishop an oppressive and impracticable duty.





## LECTURE V.

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### THE LITURGY.

My next objection to the Episcopal scheme is, that *it imposes unscriptural and burdensome restrictions upon all the clergy—upon Bishops as well as Presbyters and Deacons*. The Bible makes it the duty of ministers to offer up prayer in public assemblies ; but it does not prescribe the *form* of their prayers ; and it nowhere gives the right to do this to any man, or any body of men. If ministers are, in any good measure, qualified for their office, they are qualified to conduct the devotions of the church. And their prayers should be such as the spirit of piety in them suggests, and such as are suited to the circumstances of the congregation. And why should they not be trusted with this part of the service of the Sanctuary, as well as with other parts ? Why should they be absolutely required to pray in one particular form, and forbidden to vary one iota from it ? Who on earth has a right to tell the ministers of Christ the very thoughts they shall think, and the very words they shall speak in their supplications and confessions and thanksgivings to God on every occasion ? Were it not for the influence of custom, what gospel minister at the present day would yield this right to any one ? Is not a well qualified minister,—is not a Bishop—is not an Archbish-

op as able to make a prayer, as others are to make it for him,—and others who lived hundreds of years ago, in times of comparative ignorance? Bishops are, it is said, *successors of the Apostles*, and stand up in their place. And did the Apostles read written forms of prayer?—It is an unwarrantable and hurtful restriction. And I cannot but think, that many worthy ministers in the Episcopal church feel it to be so. It deprives them of the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free. Suppose an Episcopal Priest or Bishop, in accordance with the feelings of all others, wishes to make some uncommon event, not mentioned in the Liturgy, a particular subject of public prayer. He must not do it. His prayer is in his Book, and he must read it just as it is, without addition or alteration,—how much soever he may desire to pray, and how much soever others may desire that he would pray, in a different manner. Again. Suppose a scene occurs, such as has frequently occurred, and such as we hope will occur still more frequently;—suppose that he who is ministering in the Sanctuary, sees evident signs of awakened and solemn attention, deep anxiety, and tenderness of heart through the assembly before him, and he well knows that many are ready to ask, what shall I do to be saved, and his own heart is full of love and pity for lost souls, and strong desires for their salvation, and he longs to cry to God in their behalf in a manner adapted to their state, and to his own devout emotions. What shall he do? Why, he can only read a prayer, written many hundreds of years ago,—a prayer very good for some other occasions, but not for this. Now, were I an Episcopal minister, I do not say, were I a Bishop, but were I a minister of the lowest rank, and found myself

in such circumstances, I would instantly forget that I was under authority to any one, but to my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ,—I would cast off my bondage, and would pour out the fulness of my heart in prayer to God, just as ministers of other denominations do.

Reading public prayers from a Book may, I admit, be advisable and useful, when ministers have but little cultivation of mind and are very imperfectly prepared for their office. But if ministers are possessed of the requisite qualifications, no human being has a rightful authority to dictate to them how they shall pray; nor can they rightfully submit to such dictation, from whomsoever it may come. I know not how it is in the Episcopal church in this country; but in the church of England, when any new and remarkable event takes place, suitable to be mentioned in public prayer; it is said, that all the clergy, amounting to so many thousands, and all the Bishops too, are silent, not presuming to utter a word on the occasion, till the Archbishop,—perhaps in compliance with the petition of the Bishops and clergy under him,—composes and publishes a prayer for them to read. Now, I ask, what Apostle, with all his authority and inspiration, ever undertook anything like this? It is a palpable innovation upon Apostolical and Primitive practice;—a gross infringement of the liberty and the duty of the Ambassadors of Christ.—Leading-strings for children, not for men.—A prayer-book for unqualified, ignorant ministers, not for ministers of cultivated minds, especially those of superior gifts.

Dr. Dick, in his Lectures on Theology, objects to forms of prayer on the ground that they are not warranted by Scripture, nor even sanctioned by the example of

the Primitive Church. He thinks it more consonant to common sense, as well as to religion, that a Christian should be allowed to express the feelings and desires which spontaneously arise in his own mind, than that he should be required to conform to a standard prepared by another. "Would it not be preposterous," he says, "to confine a child to a collection of written requests, from which he was never to deviate in his addresses to his father?" He further objects to forms, because they cannot be adapted to the ever varying circumstances of God's people, and must therefore prove a painful and injurious restraint upon the liberty of the spirit which the word of God encourages us to exercise.—He thinks the Liturgy of the Episcopal church is chargeable with unnecessarily repeating the same petitions, and with joining together those which have no kind of connection. "A serious objection," he says, "is the shortness of the prayers. The longest are ended almost before you have time to bring your mind into a proper frame for joining in it; and some of them, consisting of a single sentence, are finished almost as soon as they are begun. Besides the constant interruption which is thus given to devotional feelings, there is a want of dignity and of sense in a collection of what may be called *shreds* or *fragments* of prayers. The Lord's Prayer is sometimes introduced where no person can perceive any reason for using it, and is brought forward so often in the course of the same service, as to have the appearance of vain repetition."

As I have now undertaken to inquire a little into the reason of things, I would ask why the Episcopal church, which prescribes *prayers* for ministers, does not also prescribe their sermons? It may be said, that this was



actually done ; that two volumes of Homilies, i. e. Sermons, were early written and published, and ordered to be read by the clergy in the Church ; sermons suited to the circumstances and wants of the people. I suppose however that even then, those ministers who were competent to write edifying discourses, had liberty to do it. This was all well. And those who were competent to make edifying *prayers*, should have had liberty to do this also. But why is not the use of Homilies continued, as much as the use of written prayers ? You may say, that ministers now are well educated, and are qualified to make their own sermons. This I admit. And then the question returns, are they not also qualified to make their own prayers ? If it is safe and proper to trust ministers, in the exercise of their own cultivated faculties, to write and deliver, and even to preach extemporaneously, sermons sufficient to cover the whole ground of Christian doctrine and duty ; why is it not safe and proper to trust them, in the exercise of their own intelligence and piety, to offer up extemporaneous or premeditated prayers ? Who can see any reason for the difference ? If the Episcopal church prescribes the whole course of public devotions, it should, to be consistent, prescribe the whole course of public instructions, and Bishops, as well as the inferior clergy, should use the Book of Homilies, as they now use the Book of common prayer. If it is said, that the old Homilies, though very edifying and acceptable when they were composed, are in many respects unfit to be delivered to a modern assembly,—(which is verily the case ;) then why do not the Bishops, or one of them constituted an Archbishop, write and publish new Homilies,

extending over the whole system of doctrinal and practical religion ?

I find that the Episcopal church “ suspends the order for the reading of the Homilies in churches, until a revision of them may be conveniently made for the clearing of them from obsolete words and phrases, and from the local references.” See note to Art. 35. Why has not some proper measure been taken for such a revision ? Why leave the clergy so long to preach without the help of Homilies ? And if the reading of Homilies is suspended, because, not being suited to the taste of Christians of the present day, and the circumstances of the church, they need revision ; I should suppose the same would be done with the Book of common prayer. The reasons for this are the same in kind, though not equal in degree. A revision of the prayers is demanded for “ clearing them of obsolete words and phrases,” as is said in the other case. They have already cleared them of “ local references.” Why not do more ? Why should the Book of common prayer, which is to be used continually in public worship, retain obsolete words, or employ words in an obsolete sense ? Why especially should it retain anything which, by common consent, is laid aside as unsuitable ? I refer now to what is called “ the Churching of Women ;” which has gone into general disuse. Mothers at this day cannot be expected to go through the service, as prescribed in the Prayer Book. It may be said, that whatever may be the language of the Rubric, the service is to be referred to the discretion of the minister, and to the option of women. But so it is, that their option is always against the service. And so it is likely to be ; and so I think it ought to be. And retaining it in the

Prayer Book answers no purpose but to show what was practised in former times, but is now regarded both by the Clergy and Laity, as inconsistent, not indeed with piety, nor with what was decency in other states of society, but with *modern delicacy*. Why then I ask, is an obsolete ceremony still prescribed, which is never to be observed?

And now, as I have touched upon the Liturgy, I must go a little farther. As to the general current of thought and sentiment contained in the Book of Common Prayer, —I would treat it with the sincerest veneration, not because the form in which it is presented is derived from the Fathers of the church of England, or from the Christian Fathers in the early ages of the church; but because it is thoroughly scriptural, and suited to promote true, evangelical piety. And I rejoice in the thought, that it has, through the blessing of God, been the means of aiding the devotions of an innumerable multitude of believers, and training them up for the worship of heaven. And I am confident that ministers and Christians of all denominations may be benefited by a familiar acquaintance with it. But as I have said before,—I feel myself at liberty to call in question, not what is from God, but whatever is of human origin. And considering the object of these Lectures, I should be chargeable with a palpable omission, if I should neglect to state the objections which lie in my mind not only against the *constant* and *exclusive* use of *any prescribed forms of prayer*, however excellent, but against what seems to me *faulty* in the *structure of the Liturgy itself*, as now used in the Episcopal Church.

It is, in my view, a serious objection to the Episcopal

system, that it does, to so great an extent, impose upon ministers and people an unvarying, and what appears to me an irksome *uniformity* in the public service. This I have already touched upon. Man is so constituted, that he craves variety; and you cannot deprive him of it, and confine him, without any obvious reason, to one invariable course, even in religious duties, without doing violence to the principles of his intellectual and moral nature. Look now at the manner prescribed in the Liturgy, of introducing public worship. At the commencement of every morning and every evening service, the minister must say: "Dearly beloved brethren, the Scripture moveth us in sundry places to acknowledge and confess our manifold sins and wickedness, etc." Now this introductory address, which is of some length, is all true and important; and, whenever a congregation need to be informed, that confession of sin is required by the word of God, it is proper and useful. But after the people have been frequently and fully instructed on this point, why take up their time with a constant and needless repetition, which is almost sure to become a dull formality? Instead of reiterating continually, and in the same words, that the Scripture moveth us to Confession, why not proceed at once to perform the duty? When Christians meet together for the express purpose of prayer, there is surely no occasion for them to be *always* and *invariably* told before they engage in prayer, that the Scripture moveth them to pray. They all understand this. And if you say, it is proper for them to be continually *reminded* of it, you might just as well say, that the people should be continually reminded of their duty to receive instruction; and that when we come to



the sermon, it is proper for us always to repeat exactly the same form before we begin, and say, that "the Scripture in sundry places moveth us to" *this* service, that is, ministers to preach, and the people to hear. And I cannot but think that, although ministers quietly submit to use this invariable introductory address out of respect to Episcopal authority, they would after all, in their own honest feelings, choose to be left at liberty to introduce the service either in this way or in some other, as their own good taste and judgment should dictate.

See too how remarkably particular and minute are the directions given to ministers of all degrees in regard to the manner of conducting the public service,—directing them just what they shall say before they begin and after they close the reading of the lesson. The Rubric lays down this rule, to be always observed;—"That before every Lesson, the minister shall say, Here beginneth such a chapter, or verse of such a chapter, of such a Book: and after every Lesson, Here endeth the first, or the second Lesson." It is indeed proper that the minister should inform the Congregation what portion of Scripture is to be read, as ministers of all denominations are accustomed to do. But why is it necessary to prescribe the particular manner, in which this information shall be given? Why especially is it always necessary to say to the Congregation, who have the Lesson in the Prayer Book right before them,—“Here endeth the first, or the second Lesson?” Why any more necessary than to say at the close of every prayer that is read, *Here endeth the prayer?* In the Episcopal service, the whole Congregation, several times, repeat the Lord's prayer with the minister, and they all join in saying other

prayers *after* the minister, as little children say prayers or hymns after their parents. Now everything of this kind appears to me to be a real hinderance to devotion, and a disorder and confusion quite inconsistent with the solemnity and stillness which ought to pervade a religious assembly. And it seems to me, if Paul were here, he would reprove it,—as he reproved the confusion in the Corinthian church which was occasioned by several persons speaking together. What I have now noticed, and also the very frequent changes of posture in the Assembly, must, I think, appear strange and unbecoming to any one, who has not been reconciled to them by long use.

The order of services in the Episcopal Church, which extends through the whole year, is exceedingly particular. There is a special service for the first, second, third and fourth Sundays in Advent, i. e. the four Sundays before Christmas; then for Christmas, and the first Sunday after Christmas; then for the Circumcision of Christ; then for the Epiphany, or manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles; then for the first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth Sundays after Epiphany; then for Septuagesima, or the third Sunday before Lent, then for the second, and the first Sunday before Lent; then for each Sunday during the forty days of Fasting in Lent; then for Good Friday,—Easter,—and the five Sundays after Easter; then the Ascension day; then Whitsunday, or Pentecost; then Trinity Sunday, and each of the twenty-five Sundays after Trinity; then St. Andrew's day, St. Thomas's day, etc. then All Saints day.—The arrangement for every year is the same.—Now my curiosity leads me to inquire, what is the rea-

son of all this? Why was such a particular and uniform arrangement made? Neither Christ nor the Apostles give any instructions expressly or impliedly favorable to it. And if it is considered in the light of expediency, I inquire, whether imposing one and the same course for each and every year tends to spiritual improvement, and whether it has resulted in intellectual and moral attainments above those which have been found under other forms of Public Worship.

I have one more question, namely; whether the above mentioned assignment of particular services to each Sunday is founded on any obvious reasons, and whether the particular services assigned to each Sunday are in reality any better adapted to that Sunday, than to some other; or if it is so in some cases, whether it is so generally. For example; is the short prayer provided for the sixteenth or seventeenth Sunday after Trinity, any more adapted to that Sunday, than to the eighteenth or nineteenth. The particular prayer for the seventeenth is this—the whole prayer consisting of one sentence: “Lord, we pray thee, that thy grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works, through Jesus Christ.” Now is there any reason for assigning this prayer to the seventeenth rather than to the eighteenth, for which the following prayer is provided; “Lord, we beseech thee, grant thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow thee, the only God, through Jesus Christ.” No reason appears, why these prayers should not be exchanged the one for the other. The same is true in a majority of cases. While then the service provided for some occa-

sions has an evident and happy adaptedness to those occasions ; we must regard the arrangement in other cases as altogether arbitrary. Now, even if it is expedient to require ministers and churches to conform to a particular arrangement of public services when there is an obvious reason for the arrangement ; is it expedient, when there is no reason ?

But I must now state a more serious objection against the Liturgy, namely, that, although in general it abounds in scriptural and devout sentiments, *it contains some passages which are highly exceptionable*. And no one will say, that its general excellence can justify its errors. The Episcopal church has the power to make alterations in the Liturgy. They have exercised this power, and have actually made important alterations. And there is nothing to prevent them from making more, if they judge best. Must we not then consider whatever is found in the Liturgy, to be a true expression of the belief of the Protestant Episcopal church in America,—not the belief of every individual, but of the church as a whole ?

The particular fault to which I now object, is the false doctrine contained in the Baptismal service,—which asserts the regeneration of all who are baptized. After the child is baptized, the minister says ; “ Seeing now that this child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ, let us give thanks to Almighty God for these benefits.” Then follows the Thanksgiving.—“ We give the hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to *regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit*, to receive him for *thine own child by adoption*, and to *ingraft* him into thy *holy church*.” Now if it were a fact, that every baptized child is regenerated by



the Holy Spirit and made God's own child by adoption, it would be a plain duty to acknowledge it with gratitude. But there is no evidence of the fact, either from Scripture, observation, or experience. And when those Episcopal ministers, (and there are many such,) who cordially receive the teachings of Holy Writ as to the native corruption of man and the necessity of a spiritual regeneration, go through with the Baptismal service, and say, that the baptized child is regenerated by the Holy Spirit; do they really believe *what the words naturally express*? It is evident they do not. For when baptized children come to years of understanding, they do not tell them that they have already been born again of the divine Spirit, but they urge upon them, just as all evangelical ministers do, the important doctrine, that they must experience this spiritual renovation in order to prepare them for heaven, and that it is unsafe to place any reliance upon the circumstance of their having been baptized. And yet those ministers are obliged to *say*, in so many words, that the baptized child is regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and received as God's own child by adoption, and incorporated into God's *holy* church;—language which expresses the idea of a real, saving change both of character and state, as clearly and strongly, as any language can do it. It seems to me, that such ministers must regret the necessity of saying this: because the language does plainly express a sentiment which is not theirs; and they must, I think, have found by experience, that the practice of using words and sentences in this manner cannot, without some painful struggles, be made to sit quietly upon an enlightened and upright mind. Those, who hold the doctrine of Baptismal

regeneration, according to the plain, literal meaning of the language employed in the service, believe that regenerating grace, or more exactly, *regeneration by the Holy Spirit*, that is, *spiritual regeneration*, or the *new birth*, is conveyed to the child, through the efficacy of Baptism. Just look. The moment before Baptism the child is unregenerate; the moment after, he is regenerate. Accordingly it is during the few moments occupied in Baptism, that the child is “regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and received as God’s own child by adoption, and incorporated into God’s holy church.” Here, in this wonderful transaction, a great and glorious change is accomplished,—the very change which Jesus declared to be absolutely necessary for every human being,—a new birth effected by the Spirit of God,—a change from a state of sin to a state of holiness,—a change from being a child of wrath to being an adopted child of God. But if such a momentous and instantaneous change as this is really produced by Baptism, or during the time of Baptism; it is certainly reasonable to expect some manifestations or evidences of it. And if no such evidences appear, I should suppose that those, who believe that such a change takes place in Baptism, would be grievously disappointed, and would hardly know what to think of it. Now do any such evidences appear? Does not the Baptized child exhibit the same moral qualities as children who are not Baptized? When he comes to years of understanding, does he not after all show that he needs to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, as much as though he had not been regenerated by Baptism? As Baptized children grow up, do not most of them show, that they are *not* children of God by adop-

tion? And when they are awakened to consideration, and convinced of sin, do they not know and feel, as all other convinced sinners do, the inefficacy of all outward rites, and the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit? And would any gospel minister tell them, that they had already been regenerated, and that their anxiety on that subject was needless?

Bishop Hobart says, "that there is a distinction made in the language of the Episcopal church as well as in Scripture, between *Regeneration* and *Renovation*." And he maintains "that unless the baptized person is *renewed* by the Holy Ghost, his baptismal *regeneration* will only increase his guilt."\* It comes to this, that the baptized person is "*regenerated* by the Holy Ghost," but not "*renewed* by the Holy Ghost;" and although he is already "*regenerated* by the Holy Ghost," it will profit him nothing, unless he is "*renewed* by the Holy Ghost." Our author does not however undertake to tell us what the work of the Holy Spirit in *regeneration* really is, and how it differs from the work of the same Spirit in *renovation*. We had supposed that whatever might be the case as to the influence of outward rites, the work of the *Holy Spirit* is *inward*, and influences the *affections*. But he holds to an important work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, which does not touch the inward affections; although in another part of the service, the child is spoken of as receiving "forgiveness of sin by this *spiritual regeneration*." The Bishop maintains Baptismal Regeneration expressly "in this sense, that the baptized person is *born again, not in the affections of his soul, but into a new state, etc.*" He is *regenerated* or "born

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\* Hobart's Apology for Apostolic Order, p. 230. 2d. ed.

again," and that too *by the Holy Spirit*, but is not regenerated "in the affections of his soul." These remain as they were. And the "*new state*" into which he is brought, when in Baptism he is regenerated by the Holy Spirit, is not a new *spiritual* state,—it does not pertain to his inward affections; and of course it must be a *new outward* state. The Bishop says, the baptized person is born again "*into a new state, in which he receives conditionally a title to the blessings of the gospel covenant.*" "*Receives conditionally.*" But the Baptismal service says nothing like this. It does not hint at anything conditional. It declares directly and positively, that the baptized child is "*regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and received as God's own child by adoption, and incorporated into God's holy church.*" Are not these the blessings of the Gospel covenant? The Episcopal minister renders thanks to God that all these blessings are actually bestowed upon the baptized child. And he does the same in regard to the baptized adult; and the service for adults, in several parts, plainly implies, that the baptized person, before Baptism, is unregenerate, and that in or by the act of Baptism, he is born again not only of water, but also of the Spirit. The minister does not say, as we should suppose he would according to the Bishop's explanation of the matter; "we yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee *conditionally* to give to this child a title to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and to be received as thine own child by adoption, and to be incorporated into thy holy church." He does not thus thank God for giving the child a *conditional title* to these gospel blessings; but he thanks God that he has already, in the rite of



Baptism, actually bestowed them. Accordingly, I find no small difficulty in making the Bishop's *explanation* of the Baptismal service, agree with the *language* of the service. The one says, "a *conditional title* to gospel blessings" is received in Baptism; the other says, the *blessings themselves* are received. And the Church Catechism also says, that the persons baptized, "being by nature born in sin, and children of wrath, are hereby," (i. e. by Baptism) "made the children of grace."

It would be gratifying to my feelings to know precisely what is meant in the above quotation by "the baptized person receiving *conditionally a title* to the blessings of the Gospel Covenant." The gift of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify the heart is mentioned in the Scriptures as one of the special blessings of the Gospel Covenant. Another of these blessings is set forth in that gracious promise of God, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." In this is included all good. Such are the principal blessings of the New Covenant. The baptized child receives a *conditional title* to these blessings. A conditional title, is a title depending on the fulfilment of certain conditions. What are the conditions in this case? The conditions cannot be the application of water to the child and solemnly pronouncing over him by the minister the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; for it is in or by this Baptismal service, that he *receives* the conditional title,—the conditions of the title being still *to be* fulfilled. What then are the *conditions*? And by whom are they to be performed? It appears from the Baptismal service, that the conditions are to be performed for a time, by the Sponsors, that is, the parents or other per-

sons, who present the child for Baptism, and enter into solemn engagements for him and in his name. The minister, after referring to the promise of Christ, says to the Sponsors: "This infant must also—for *his* part, *promise by you* that are his sureties (until he come of age to take it upon himself,) that he will renounce the Devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's holy word, and obediently keep his commandments." He then puts the particular questions to each one of the sureties and receives the answers. "Dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the Devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and all sinful desires of the flesh —?" Answer. "I renounce them all; and will endeavour by God's help, not to follow them —."—"Dost thou believe all the articles of the Christian faith, as contained in the Apostles' creed?" Ans. "I do." "Wilt thou be baptized into this faith?" Ans. "That is my desire." "Wilt thou then obediently keep all God's commandments, and walk in them all the days of thy life?" Ans. "I will, by God's help."—In these promises, the Sureties, severally, personate the infant; that is, they speak in his name, and enter into engagements for him. Now there are some things in this transaction which a plain Puritan finds it rather hard to understand. Are the sureties responsible for the fulfilment of the promises they make? Or, as they speak in the name of the child, does the responsibility rest on *him*? It seems from the transaction, that they become specially responsible, till the child comes of age. If so, then in what way are they to fulfil their promises, that is, in what way is each of them to renounce the Devil and his works, and to be-

lieve and obey God's word *for the child during his infancy*? Is the faith and obedience to be exercised by the *Sureties*, or by the *child*? If the *Sureties* do themselves, in the exercise of their own faculties, truly believe and obey, is that a fulfilment of the promise they make in the name of the child? If not, then what more shall they do, seeing they cannot so identify themselves with the mind of the child, that their act in believing and obeying shall become *his own personal act*? But if, whatever may seem to be implied in the promise, the *Sponsors* are not really responsible for the child's faith and obedience during his infancy, and if, as is plainly signified, the *child* is not responsible, until he grows up; then where does the responsibility lie,—the responsibility for the fulfilment, during the child's infancy, of the promise made by the *Sureties*? After the child is of sufficient age, he of course takes the responsibility upon himself.

If the real import of the promise which the *Sponsors* make, is meant to be this,—that they will take care, as far as possible, that the child receive a religious education; that he be restrained from vice, and be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; then why should not the language of the promise be such as clearly to convey this meaning? Why should a transaction made up of mysteries,—an *ænigma ænigmatorum*, more puzzling than Sampson's riddle, be used to set forth or rather to cover up so plain a matter?—an enigma too, the explanation of which is another and a still darker enigma.

But to return. So far as the *Sponsors* are concerned, the *condition* of the child's title to gospel blessings must

be the fulfilment of the promises they make in behalf of the child. And these promises you will take care to understand as well as you can. But what are the conditions which relate to the child himself? On what conditions, to be performed by *him*, does his title to the blessings of the Gospel Covenant rest? The Gospel itself summarily represents these conditions to be, repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. The child then, in Baptism, receives a title to the blessings of the Gospel Covenant, on condition that, in due time, he shall repent and believe. But here is another difficulty. For are not these very blessings offered to all, whether baptized or not, on these same conditions? And does not every faithful minister, whether Episcopal or not, declare to all men, without reference to the circumstance of their having been baptized or not, that all spiritual blessings will be theirs, if they will repent, and believe in Christ? If then this conditional title is common to all who live under the gospel dispensation; how is it *received in Baptism*?

I have only a word more. Episcopalians have, in several instances in their Liturgy, provided a *second* form of the service, to be used by any who shall prefer it to the first. This is the case in the Ordination service. The Bishop is to repeat the first form, or another which follows it. The same choice between two modes of proceeding is provided as to the sign of the cross in Baptism, and as to the mode of applying the water, and as to repeating a part of the Apostles' Creed. Now such a provision appears to me much more important in this case, than in any of the other cases referred to. And I have often been inclined to ask, why Episcopalians have not, in this case



as in the others, exercised their authority and their charity, and provided a second form of the Baptismal service, in which the doctrine of *regeneration by the Holy Spirit in Baptism*, should be omitted, so that ministers of different views might be freed from a heavy burden, and be at liberty to act according to their honest convictions.

My next allegation against the Liturgy is, that *it presents a low and unscriptural standard of the Christian character*. Those doubtless are regarded as true believers and heirs of eternal life, who are confirmed by the Bishop, and received to the communion of the Supper, and who are spoken of as Christians in the Funeral Service. As to the last, although the Liturgy has been improved by the Protestant Episcopal church in America, it is still plainly implied in the whole service, that the person deceased, whether pious or not, was a Christian, and died in the Lord. To any one who reads or hears the service, this is perfectly manifest. And there is no way to avoid this conclusion, but by an unnatural and forced explanation, or rather an evasion, of the import of the language. The service is exceedingly solemn and impressive, and is remarkably appropriate to the funeral of a devout Christian. But if used at the burial of a person who was evidently destitute of the Christian character, as it so frequently is; it conveys the false and dangerous sentiment, that a life of ungodliness is not incompatible with a title to heaven; and in this way it directly tends to confirm the irreligious in their irreligious life. And here I cannot but notice the manifest inconsistency, not to say absurdity, of attempting to frame a single

service, which shall be suited to the burial of the most eminent servant of Christ, and at the same time suited to the burial of the worldly and profane. The service is indeed "not to be used for any unbaptized adults, or any who die excommunicate, or who have laid violent hands upon themselves." These are the only exceptions. It may be used for baptized inebriates, or infidels. There are many persons, who, for some cause, have not been baptized, who yet have exhibited, in life and in death, the character of exemplary Christians. To these, Christian burial is, according to the Rubric, to be denied.

An unscriptural standard of Christian character is also held forth in the "Order of Confirmation." In the first place, the minister says to the Sureties for the baptized child: "Ye are to take care that this child be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed by him, as soon as he can *say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the ten commandments, and is sufficiently instructed in the other parts of the Church Catechism set for that purpose.*" The same qualifications are mentioned at the beginning of the "Order of Confirmation." Confirmation is limited to "such as can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the ten commandments, and can also answer to such other questions as in the Short Catechism are contained." These are the qualifications required in order to Confirmation, and, as I suppose, in order to communion with the church in the Lord's Supper. I am happy to say, there are Bishops who go far above this low standard, and, with a laudable zeal and fidelity, insist upon much more than is required in the articles relating to Confirmation, that is, a mere ability to "say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the ten commandments, and the Church Cate-

chism ;” and who will not confirm and receive to the Communion of the Supper any persons who do not give some satisfactory evidence of real piety. And I cannot but think that such Bishops are fully aware of the above-mentioned deficiency in the Liturgy, and regret that “ the Order of Confirmation ” does not hold up to public view a higher and more Scriptural standard of Christian character. They may indeed do something towards supplying the deficiency by a reference to other parts of the Liturgy, and to the Homilies perhaps. But a manifest deficiency it is ; and it comes continually, with all its deceptive influence, before the minds of those who attend the public service of Confirmation in the Episcopal church.

It is, with me, a grave objection to the Episcopal Church, that *it retains and sanctions so many of the additions which were made to the simple institutions of the gospel by the superstition of the Christian Fathers and the church of Rome.* The corruption of Christianity by human inventions began even in the time of the Apostles. And these inventions, these additions to the divine institutions, *whether recommended by their novelty, or rendered venerable by their antiquity,* the Apostles repeatedly and severely condemned. And they foretold, that still greater corruptions would, by the same means, be brought into the church after their decease. In the primitive ages, superstition developed itself continually by new inventions, which were intended to impress the popular mind in favor of religion, and to give increased influence to its holy doctrines and laws. The Christian Fathers, during the three or four centuries after Christ, laid the foundation of the church of Rome. That church,

during the period of its greatest power and corruption, constantly appealed to the Fathers; and the appeal was not in vain. If the Fathers during the first four or five centuries are allowed to possess decisive authority in regard to opinions, rites and ceremonies; the peculiarities of the Romish church can, for the most part, be vindicated and sustained. Many of the best writers in the church of England, and in the Protestant Episcopal church in America, disclaim the authority of the Fathers, and hold to the Scriptures as the sufficient and only rule of faith and practice. And yet Episcopalians at this day retain a great proportion of the rites, and ceremonies of Popery;—not so much, I suppose, because they belonged to Popery, as because they have so long been practised in their own church. Some indeed consider it as a conclusive argument in their defence, that they were in use during the first ages of Christianity. A late respectable writer in favor of Prelacy says, “that the distinguishing characteristic of the Protestant Episcopal church is, the deference it pays to the Primitive Church; that it is the principle constantly maintained by that Church, that *whatever is first is true, and whatever is later is false.*” On this ground, (which has already been examined,) many Episcopalians contend for those various ceremonial observances, which have been added to the simplicity of the gospel.

Now I do not admit that *ancient* Fathers had any more authority to make additions to the divine institutions, than *modern* Fathers. Why should we pay deference to uninspired men in the third and fourth centuries, more than to those in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries;—or, to the Fathers of the Episcopal



Church in England, more than to the Fathers of the Presbyterian church in Scotland, or to the Fathers of the Puritan church in New England? The opinion and practice of uninspired men cannot bind us. We are Protestants.—And it seems to me, that Episcopalians, professing as they do to be Protestants, act inconsistently with their profession in paying so much regard to antiquity, and especially in retaining so many of the peculiar forms and observances of the Romish church. And I think too, that the Episcopal church is inconsistent with itself, in that it adopts some of the ancient observances, while it rejects others. The holy days kept in honor of the Trinity, of Angels, of the birth and circumcision of Christ, of the Virgin Mary, of the Apostles, of several particular Martyrs and Christian Fathers, etc. were all at first ecclesiastical innovations; but they became settled usages in the Ancient church. The founders of the Protestant Episcopal church, by taking some of these, and omitting others, showed that they had no implicit confidence in antiquity, and that they claimed the right of judging and acting for themselves. When they pleased, they adopted an observance which originated in the bosom of Popery in the fourteenth century, and rejected one which was generally observed in the third century. Now are not those who profess such deference to ecclesiastical antiquity, while after all they are not governed by it, chargeable with some inconsistency? Does their deference really amount to any more than this, that they will follow the Ancients or not, as they judge best? If this is all, then we agree with them. If they profess more than this, their practice falls short of their profession. If then modern Episcopalians charge us with the

want of a due veneration for antiquity, because we reject most of the ancient ceremonies which *they* adopt; the same charge, substantially lies against them, because they take upon them to reject so many of the ancient ceremonies. The ancient Fathers in administering Baptism, in the fourth century, *immersed the person three times, naked, and then made the sign of the cross on his forehead, and anointed him with holy oil.* But Episcopalians reject the *trine* immersion, and *the ceremony of nakedness*, and *the anointing*, and do not commonly use *immersion*. I do not blame them for all this. But where is the deference they profess to the ancient church, when they reject the greater part of the ceremonies which were anciently used in Baptism?

The Episcopal church have, if I am rightly informed, about twenty-eight Festivals, and about one hundred Fasts;—that is, one hundred and twenty-eight holy-days, in addition to the Lord's day;—taken either directly from the Romish church,—for instance, the Festival in honor of the Trinity, which Bishop Hobart says is comparatively of modern date, originating as it did in the fourteenth century,—or from what they call the Primitive church; and all on the ground of their antiquity. But the Romish church, and what is called the Primitive church, had many more Festivals and Fasts. If then the Founders of the Episcopal church in England and America were governed by a respect for antiquity, why did they not take the whole list of the holy-days of antiquity, as well as a part? And if they are at liberty to reject more or fewer of the holy-days of antiquity, as they judge best; on the same principle, we are at liberty to reject them all, if we judge best. If ancient usage has

authority over us, it has authority throughout. But if we renounce the authority of what is commonly called ancient and primitive usage, we are thrown back, as we should be, upon the authority of what is *more Ancient and Primitive*, that is, *the word of God*.

These multiplied outward observances, every one must see, are a *departure from the Christian Scriptures*. Neither Christ nor the Apostles appointed any particular days to be kept as sacred by the church, except the Lord's day. On the contrary, the Apostle Paul expressly and pointedly discountenanced all such observances. In the way of severe rebuke, he said to the Galatians; "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." And it was in view of these superstitions, that he said to them,—“I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.” And he spoke of them as in bondage to these “beggarly elements.” If the same Apostle were here, what would he say to that branch of the Protestant Christian church, which has made about one third of the days in the year religious Festivals and Fasts?

These multiplied rites and observances are *burdensome*. Although they fall far short of the observances in the Romish church; still they are, in my view, carried to a great excess, and, if fully practised, would prove an intolerable yoke. Think of more than one hundred and twenty Festivals and Fasts,—one third part of the whole year! Think of forty days in Lent, in which, I suppose, the stricter sort of Episcopalians abstain from animal food! Who has a right to load the church, and the conscience of Christians, with such impositions? I was born free, and I will not sell my birth-

right. Most cheerfully will I submit to the authority of God. And I will show my respect and veneration for the Apostles, not by keeping days in their honor, which I know they never wished,—but by believing and obeying their instructions, which I know they did wish. But what is mere man, uninspired man, that we should bow the knee to him,—and that we should eat or not eat, and work or pray, at his bidding?

This whole business of observing days and months and times, which began in the Apostle's day, and for which he rebuked the backsliding Galatians, *has an obvious tendency to corrupt Christianity, and to substitute external forms and ceremonies in the place of real godliness.* When I look at the machinery of the Episcopal church in her Sunday services; her multiplied short prayers, consisting often of a single sentence, and constantly interrupted by other intermingled services; the frequent repetition of the Lord's prayer; the continual change of posture among the worshippers, now standing, now sitting, now kneeling; the confused noise of the whole congregation often speaking the same things together; the minister's singular dress, and change of place and attire;—when I look at her many scores of Fasts and Festivals in honor not only of God, and Christ, but of the mother of Christ, and each of the Apostles of Christ,—in honor of the slaughtered infants of Bethlehem,—in honor of all saints,—and in honor of Saint Michael and all angels;—at her crosses, and her pictures, and the magnificence of her Cathedrals;—at her protracted meetings for forty days in Lent, and for many days at other times; when, accustomed as I am to the simplicity of Puritan worship, I look at all this solemn



machinery ; I am sometimes affected with a mixed emotion of respect and doubt and fear ;—and sometimes an impression, which I wish to avoid, is made on my mind, —an impression too similar to what I have, when I look at the machinery employed by such men as Foote and Burchard and Knapp,—their protracted meetings, their anxious seats, their moving from one place to another, their multitude of short prayers,—in a word, their whole complicated system of *New Measures*. The abovementioned forms and observances of the Episcopal church, though now fixed, and brought into a uniform order, and made respectable by long use, were once *New Measures*, *innovations*, *human contrivances*, intended for the very purpose of working upon the feelings of men ; and I fear they have, in some degree at least, the same alliance with superstition, and the same tendency to promote a superficial, ceremonial religion, with the machinery of our modern evangelists and innovators. The Episcopal system however differs in one essential point, namely, that its movements and ceremonies, superabundant as I think them to be, are all exactly prescribed and unalterable ; whereas the others are left at loose ends, to be managed and shifted by the ever-varying fancies and freakish humors of conceited, obtrusive individuals, without the consent or even the knowledge of the great body of evangelical ministers and intelligent Christians.

It may be said, that the ceremonials of the church are matters of *taste*, not of argument. So be it. I have *my taste*, and a right to tell what it is,—and, if it does not contradict anything in the Bible, I have a right to conform to its suggestions. Let me say then, that I have a preference, too strong to be expressed, for what is *plain*

and *simple*. The worship of the Puritans, and their freedom from rites and forms of human origin, instead of being contrary to any principle of Christianity, are certainly, as any one who reads the New Testament will perceive, conformed, in a good measure, to the pattern set before us by Christ and the Apostles. The perfect plainness and seriousness, and the divine simplicity of their public and social worship was what our Puritan Fathers endeavoured to copy, but scarcely equalled, and certainly never exceeded, however distant they were from showy rites and ceremonies. In this respect the Puritans acted on a widely different principle from the church of England,—which did not even pretend to follow the simplicity of the mode of worship adopted by Christ and his Apostles, but conformed, and that professedly, to the ceremonies and observances which originated in the ancient church, subsequently to the days of inspiration.

That you may understand more fully how I view this general subject, I will advert to a particular case. The Rubric first directs that the sign of the cross shall be made on the forehead of the baptized child; but immediately after very kindly says, that if those who present the child shall desire it, the sign of the cross shall be omitted, “although the church knows no worthy cause of scruple concerning the same.” Now you may ask, what worthy cause of scruple is there? What harm can there be in such a significant ceremony as this?

My reply is, that using the sign of the cross in Baptism is a human invention, an addition to the ordinance as appointed by Christ, and practised by the Apostles; and that permitting an addition in this respect opens the

door for other additions without number. Why should you make any addition to a rite, which was complete in its original form? Do you adopt it, because it was introduced by the Christian Fathers? But by what authority did they introduce it? And if you follow them in this additional ceremony, you may also in the three-fold immersion, and the anointing, and the nudity. If you allow the beginning of human inventions in religion, the evil will be likely to grow; and who can tell where it will end? The moment in which any ceremony, invented by man, is joined to a divine institution,—*that is the moment of danger*. A second ceremony may be added to the first, and then a third, and a fourth; and unauthorized ceremonies may be multiplied, as they were in the fourth and fifth centuries, and still more in the Romish church, till religion, instead of consisting, as Christ intended it should, in *worshipping God in Spirit and in truth*, shall become a *religion of ceremonies*,—in that respect resembling the religion of Mohammedans and Hindoos.—As to the outward sign of the cross, it is well to keep in mind the very just remark of a distinguished Episcopalian; namely, “that in general, the less humble, believing regard has been paid to the *doctrine of the cross*, and to the *propitiatory sacrifice offered by the crucified Immanuel*, the greater veneration has been rendered to the *external form*. This outward sign began to be introduced, when the simplicity of the gospel had become greatly corrupted. It was at its height a short time before the Reformation; and it began to decline, when the doctrines of the Gospel became more generally understood and believed.”





## LECTURE VI.

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IN regard to the externals in religion, I must claim for myself the same right to think and speak and act, as I am willing to concede to others. It is, in my view, an unquestionable truth, that ceremonies and ritual observances of some kind, and to some extent, are demanded by the principles of our nature; and that, whatever may be the degree of our intelligence and piety, we cannot be deprived of them without loss. The author of our religion appointed external rites to be observed perpetually in his church on earth. And as he knew what was in man, and what external means were best adapted to his nature and his wants; we ought, I think, to have perfect confidence in the wisdom of his appointments, and be satisfied with just the kind and the number of ceremonial observances, which he and his inspired Apostles introduced. What is there in the condition of men in subsequent ages, which can be supposed to render other rites and ceremonies more needful, than they were in the days of Christ and the Apostles? It seems to me that the best way to manifest our reverence for the Founders of Christianity, is, to confine ourselves exactly to the external institutions and rites which they established, not doubting that they would have varied them, or added more, had they judged it necessary to the welfare of the church.

But if, instead of this rigid adherence to the simple instructions and example of Christ and the Apostles, we adopt the principle of the Episcopalians, as stated in the 20th Article, namely; that “the Church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies,”—though not “contrary to God’s written word;” and as stated in their 34th Article, namely; that “Every particular or national church hath authority to ordain, change and abolish ceremonies or rites of the church, ordained only by man’s authority, so that all things be done to edifying;”—if we adopt this principle, and consider the church as having authority over rites and ceremonies, under the limitations mentioned; still is it not important that the church should use that authority aright? And if any “particular church,” for example, the Reformed church in the time of Luther, or the Puritan church in the time of Owen and Baxter, or the church of Scotland, is seriously convinced, that any rites or ceremonies of human origin, which have been customary, are not edifying, but tend to superstition; then, according to the very Article above quoted, has not that church “authority to — abolish” those “rites?”

Under the Mosaic economy, religious rites and ceremonies existed in great abundance, constituting, as Peter represented, Acts 15:10, *an intolerable yoke*, or as Paul called it, Gal. 5:1, “a yoke of bondage.” But those multiplied rites, which were appointed for temporary purposes, were superseded by the more spiritual dispensation of Christianity. We cannot then argue from the existence of any rite or ceremony under the former dispensation, that it should be kept up under the latter. This argument can no more be used to justify

costly and gorgeous vestments for any class of Christian ministers, than to justify the sacrifice of beasts, or any other ritual observances. Be it so, that the kind and number of ceremonies to be used among Christians, must be referred to their own judgment and taste, in the circumstances in which they are placed. Still, is there not a wrong judgment and taste, as well as a right? And are there not some sober principles, some rational considerations, which should guide us in this matter? May we not learn some useful lessons from the history of the church in different periods and in different places? In the proper use of our discretionary power, nothing can afford us more valuable assistance, than the experience of past times. It will be suitable then, that we should make a twofold inquiry: first; what has been the state of religion at those times when the ceremonies of the church have been most abundant and splendid; and, secondly; what has been the state of religion, when its ceremonials have been most plain and simple? If these inquiries are diligently and candidly pursued, the result cannot fail to be of essential benefit.

Here we are carried back to the long period, the centuries upon centuries, in which Papal Rome was triumphant. That was preëminently, *the period of rites and ceremonies*. And who is ignorant of the fact, that the spirit of piety decreased, very much in proportion to the increase of ceremonial observances? The influence of these two was doubtless reciprocal. The low and apostate condition of the church naturally led to the multiplication of external rites and forms, as a substitute for true piety. And these, in their turn, by occupying the mind with a lower class of emotions, precluded those which

are more spiritual, and reduced Christianity to such a state, that little more than the name was left. And it is much the same at the present day. In those countries where there is the greatest abundance of ceremonies, and where ceremonies are most highly esteemed; there, if I mistake not, is the least real piety. In such circumstances, even those who appear to be religious, have their fancies so filled and delighted with the variety and splendour of ceremonies, that it is difficult for divine truth to reach their hearts. Their minds light upon the captivating exterior, and rest there; and, as a necessary consequence, they are deprived of the more essential elements of the divine life. As to those who are destitute of piety,—their attention to ceremonials takes the place of gospel holiness, and produces self-complacency, and quietness in sin. By multiplying outward observances, not enjoined in the word of God, or by attaching too great importance to those which were enjoined, they make void the divine law. And facts show, both among the Jews and the Catholics, that there are no men so shielded against the power of truth, and so far from the kingdom of heaven, as those whose consciences are quieted and whose hearts are stupified by superstitious observances. The most abandoned sinners,—our Saviour says, “publicans and harlots,” are more easily converted than they. And let me just add, that they who have little or no religion, are, in many cases, strongly inclined to multiply external rites and forms, as a means of appeasing their guilty and restless consciences. “Being ignorant of the righteousness of God,” that is, of God’s way of justifying them who believe, and being opposed in their hearts to the requirements of the divine law,



“they go about to establish a righteousness of their own” by superstitious observances. This has been the case to a great extent among Jews and Christians, and also among Mohammedans and Pagans.

Turn now to the other side. Take those who have adhered most strictly to the simplicity of gospel institutions, and guarded most scrupulously against human inventions. And where can you find a better instance, than the Puritans of New England from the beginning to the present time? Far would I be from boasting. Were I ever so much inclined to this, there is enough in New England to prevent. But it is always safe to judge of the tree by its fruits. And I am persuaded that the character of the Puritans will bear to be tried by this test. There has, I think, been no race of men, who have exhibited more of the genuine fruits of the Spirit, or have done more for the highest interests of Christ's kingdom, than the pious Puritans. New England, in the best aspects of its character and condition, is what the influence of the Puritans has made it. And it is well known that Puritans have always been averse to ceremonies;—perhaps they have carried their aversion to an extreme. In New England, the religion of the Puritans has been the prevailing religion, and it *was* the established religion. And so far, at least, as Massachusetts is concerned, other forms of religion are sectarian, and other denominations are Dissenters. Now the connection of the character, institutions and prosperity of New England with the plain manners and simple religious rites of its inhabitants, is not accidental; but is founded in the nature of the mind, and the nature of Christianity. Other things being equal, plain Chris-

tians, with simple religious observances,—I mean, just so simple, as they are set forth to be in the New Testament,—are more likely to worship God in spirit and in truth, and attain to eminence in piety, than those who are occupied and encumbered with a multitude of religious forms and ceremonies.

But there is another source of knowledge, which I would not overlook. Job said; “Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall instruct thee.” I say too, ask the heavens and the earth, and they shall impart some profitable knowledge in regard to the present subject. The works of God in creation and providence, are stamped with wonderful majesty and simplicity. The majesty of the divine works is a real majesty, consisting in their own nature and extent, and not arising from anything like pomp or ceremonial, intended to make an artificial display. The works of God are unostentatious and simple. They are just what they are, never putting on any outward appearances of grandeur for the sake of impression. The Sun is a great and glorious object, suited to fill beholders with wonder and joy. “His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.” But see how silently and unostentatiously he moves and shines, and how modestly he conceals almost all his greatness and splendor from our view. Though many hundred thousands of times as large as this whole world of ours, he presents himself to our view as but little larger than a man’s hand. So it is with the whole solar system. Who can comprehend its sublimity and grandeur? But what

perfect simplicity appears in every part. Stand and gaze upon the moon and stars in a clear evening sky. There is no ostentation, no noise. It is simple, silent majesty.—The worlds around us are all in rapid and various motion: but they suffer not their motion to be seen, though gazed upon ever so intensely. The created Universe is full of greatness and glory. But it has no ceremony. So far from putting on an artificial exterior to make a display of its intrinsic excellence, it seems rather to take pains to hide its excellence from our eyes. This is *God's manner of working*.

And how is it with the sublimest works which man has been enabled to perform,—I mean miraculous works? Read the story of what took place in Egypt. Moses was engaged in bringing great and marvellous things to pass. But how simple his appearance, and his manner of action. He did not assume the gorgeous apparel of a young Egyptian Prince, to gain the admiration of the people. He did indeed make use of a few outward signs. But how plain and simple they were. He had a rod or staff in his hand; and when about to work a miracle, he merely stretched out that rod, in obedience to the divine command, and as a sign of the divine power. This was the amount of the ceremony which Moses used.

Consider the case of Naaman, the Syrian, who came with great pomp to Elisha to be healed of his leprosy, and expected that Elisha would be as pompous as he, and would come out majestically, and stand and call upon the name of his God, and move his hand over the place, and so recover the leper. Of course, he was greatly disappointed at the simplicity and plainness of

the Prophet, who had nothing to do with pomp and ceremony, and only said, "wash, and be clean."

What majesty and glory marked the works of Christ! But how little ceremony and display appeared! His coming was not with outward show, but with divine power. He spake, and it was done. He said to the sick, be healed,—to the dead, come forth,—to the boisterous winds and waves, be still. Once he used what may be called a ceremony, or outward sign. But it was exceedingly simple. He wet a little clay, and put it on the eyes of the blind man, and told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam.—The Apostles imitated their Lord and Master, and wrought miracles in the most simple, unostentatious manner possible,—just speaking a word, or laying on their hand, as a token of their dependence on God, and their expectation of his agency in accomplishing the miraculous works.

By these remarkable instances of divine works we are taught, that the greatest and best things, and things intended to make the deepest and most sacred impression on the human mind, may be accomplished, and are accomplished, without ceremony and show. By the divine works *themselves*, unaccompanied by any magnificent signs, or any signs whatever, except those which are merely sufficient to direct our thoughts to the Almighty Agent,—by these works *themselves*, the most sublime truths are inculcated, and the most salutary and devout emotions excited.

And why is not the same true in regard to our present subject,—the worship, the institutions and rites of our religion? I might reason on the subject; but I choose to go where a clearer light shines, than human



reasoning can afford, and where an example is presented, of higher authority, than all the usages of ancient or modern times. I go directly to the *word of God*,—to the *New Testament*, where we find truth unmixed with error, and where the Christian institutions and rites are set before us in their original purity,—just as they came from our Great High Priest, the Head of the church, and just as they were administered by him and by his inspired Apostles. Whatever, and however various, may be the opinions and practices of uninspired men, and however difficult it may be for us, in some cases, to determine from them what is right and what is wrong; this one thing is clear;—that so far as we conform, in judgment and practice, to the instructions and example of Christ and his Apostles, we are on the ground of truth and safety.

Read then the history of Christ and the Apostles; and learn what you can, of their raiment and their personal appearance. Begin with Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord and Saviour of the church. How was it with him in regard to clothing and personal appearance? A peculiar and very splendid dress, you know, was prescribed for the High Priest under the Mosaic economy. Did Jesus assume that peculiar and splendid dress? Did he assume any part of it, or make any approach to it? Did he put on any robes, by which he was distinguished from the common people? Far from it. Jesus wore no sacerdotal dress; and no crown adorned his head, except a crown of thorns. He was indeed a High Priest, and he was a King, and that by way of eminence; and he was a Jew too. Why then did he not assume the insignia of a Jewish High Priest and a Jewish King?—

Because he was a High Priest of another order,—a spiritual High Priest;—and because he was a King of another character,—a King, whose kingdom was not of this world;—because he was so much superior to a Jewish High Priest and King, that it would have been degrading to his character and office, to wear the garments prescribed for them. Such was his personal excellence and worthiness, and so dignified and glorious his work, that he neither used nor needed any outward splendor to recommend him, and to gain for him the love and veneration of his people. And how was it with his Apostles, who held the highest office in his church, and were set up as examples to all gospel ministers? How was it with the holy Apostles? Did they put on any rich and sacerdotal robes, distinguishing them from other men? Did their Lord prescribe any such robes, as necessary or proper to their office? Not so. They needed no such external distinctions, no peculiar insignia of their Apostolic office. They needed nothing to secure the esteem and veneration of men, but the superior excellence of their character and works, the dignity of truth and virtue,—the *likeness of Christ*. When Paul appeared before Felix, and before Agrippa, to make his defence; would it have added anything to his personal dignity, or to the power of his address, had he worn the splendid dress of a Jewish High Priest, or a Popish Cardinal?

You see now how it is with Jesus, our great exemplar, and with his Apostles. They made use of nothing themselves in the way of *external distinction*; and they prescribed nothing for others. Nowhere in the New Testament have we any precept or example either of Christ

or his Apostles, in favor of anything ornamental in our dress or outward appearance, as a badge of the sacred office.

What shall we say then of the costly and showy attire, worn in after ages by the Dignitaries of the church of Rome? Did they think it a proper expression of Christian humility? Or was it an affectation of the pomp of Oriental courts? Or was it an attempt to copy after a Jewish ceremonial which had been done away? Or was it intended as a substitute for the excellence of truth and holiness? And has not too great a part of the rich, Pontifical attire of the Romish Bishops been retained in the Protestant Episcopal church?

Here, in the exercise of the right which I claim, of remarking freely on whatever is of human origin, I turn to the form of consecrating a Bishop. That part of the service which consists of addresses and prayers, is, with one exception, just. But when I come to the ceremonial as to the Bishop's dress, and find that, according to the particular direction of the Rubric, the Bishop, who is presented for consecration, is to be vested with a Surplice, or *White garb*, I pause a little, and yield to my propensity,—which I hope is not one of the forbidden propensities,—to inquire into the reason of things. According to the common custom of dress, we should think that an outside garment of white linen, muslin, or lawn, worn in a public assembly, would be far more suitable for a woman, than for a man. We must look then for some other ground of the ceremony, besides the influence of common usage. Now I should be apt to think, that the white color of the garment must be intended to denote the *peculiar purity or holiness* of the *ministerial*

*character or office.* But I am met with a difficulty here; for, in the services of the Sabbath, the white dress is worn only through a part of the exercises, and then is changed for a black dress; and if the color of the garments is meant to indicate moral qualities, and if white indicates purity or holiness; then, as black is the opposite of white, it would seem to indicate the opposite of purity. Besides, it would be a question which I could not readily solve, why the ministerial character or office should be considered more pure and holy in one part of the public service, than in another part. I must then regard the use of the white gown, and the change from white to black as a custom *sui generis*, and as a total departure from the custom which in all other cases governs the dress of men in religious assemblies. And the reasons of all this, though far from being obvious to common minds, may perhaps be fully set forth in some ancient or modern document, which satisfactorily explains the various forms and ceremonies of the Episcopal church, as the Homilies of Cyril explain some of the ceremonies which prevailed in his day, particularly those which pertained to the rite of Baptism.—Or perhaps I am going beyond my province. For the grounds of this peculiar custom of dress may perhaps be such, that neither curiosity nor reason has any right to meddle with them.

I shall however take the liberty to proceed,—holding myself ready to be checked or corrected, as the case may require.—After various religious services, *the Bishop is to put on the rest of the Episcopal habit.* Several additional ceremonials have been used in the consecration of an English Bishop, particularly putting a *mitre*



or *crown* on his head, and setting him on a little throne. These however are not adopted in this country, and I know not whether the throne is continued in England, except, as I am told, for the Archbishop. But the Rubric not only prescribes a *peculiar dress* for a Bishop, but, what is more, requires a part of that official dress to be put on before the service of consecration begins, and the rest during the service, just before the laying on of hands. Now if I were to apply my reason to the subject, I should say, if the whole of the Bishop's habit is not put on before the beginning of the public service, why any part of it? Or I would rather ask, why the whole Episcopal habit is not put on before repairing to the church? Why so much ado about the Bishop's dress, in the midst of the solemn public service? But here too reasoning may be out of place. I repair then to the infallible standard. And I find that all this ceremonial about the Bishop's attire is an addition to the instructions and example of Christ and his Apostles, and to the simple institutions of the gospel. And farther: if, on the ground of ancient usage, so much ceremonial as this is required, why not more? Why not invest a Bishop completely with the gorgeous apparel of a Jewish High Priest, or of the highest ecclesiastics at Rome? At least, why not retain the English practice of *crowning* the Bishop?

But in regard to this matter of dress, the question again forces itself upon my thoughts;—did Jesus wear anything like the peculiar attire of a Bishop? And did he ever make any alteration in his attire during public worship? It may be said that Jesus was poor, and that he had not the means of procuring costly robes. He

was indeed poor ; but his poverty was voluntary. The riches of the universe were at his command. Besides, if any peculiar dress, any external badge of his high office, had been offered to him ; would he have accepted it ? Would he not have rebuked those who offered it, as he did those who wished to crown him as a King, saying, “ my kingdom is not of this world.”

I go also to the Apostles. Did they on any occasion appear in a peculiar attire, like what I have noticed ? Paul doubtless was a Bishop. Did Paul wear it ? Peter was a Bishop ; and they say he was *the Bishop of Rome* ;—and doubtless he was as truly great and worthy of honor, as any who call themselves his successors. But did Peter, *the Bishop of Rome, and the worthy Predecessor of all the Popes* !—did he wear a splendid, pontifical attire ?—Paul and Peter and all the Apostles were plain men ;—they were decent, honorable, wise men, and they had a good *taste* ; but they were plain men,—men of great simplicity, and averse to outward decorations and vain show. Paul and Peter gave their united and decided testimony against such decorations even in women, in whom they must be allowed to be proper, if proper at all. See 1 Tim. 2 : 9. 1 Pet. 3 : 3. Had there been occasion for it, they would doubtless have given a still stronger testimony against unusual decorations in the dress of men.

Shall I ask you just to look at the scene which has, more than once, presented itself to my imagination,—an imagination not endued with the gift of extravagance, or with the power of creating things out of nothing.—On the one hand, then, turn your eyes to Paul, and Peter, and John, and James, and Jesus their Lord among them,

—all clothed with plain, decent, simple apparel. Behold attentively the Son of God and the Son of man,—and those ministers and Apostles of his.—On the other hand, see, standing near them, four Catholic Bishops, and the Pope,—or four English Bishops, and the Archbishop,—arrayed in gorgeous robes, the insignia of their high office. Mark the contrast!—the plain, humble appearance of those on one side,—and the splendid, magnificent appearance of those on the other side. Who would suppose that Son of man, so meek and lowly, to be their Supreme Lord and King? And who would suppose that those Catholic or English Bishops, thus apparelled, were *his servants*, commissioned by him, and receiving all power and authority, and all spiritual blessings from him;—and that they were the successors in the ministerial office, of those Apostles,—men so plain, and clothed with humility? Is it alleged, that modern Bishops need something to set off their character and office, and to secure the respect of the multitude? But why did not Christ and the Apostles need such an exterior to recommend them? *Ah! you say, they had the recommendation of high sanctity of character,—the recommendation of divine truth,—the majesty of truth.* Well then, let all the servants of Christ and successors of the Apostles be invested, as I trust some of them are, with the same sanctity of character, and the same majesty of divine truth; and this shall be their recommendation,—this shall secure for them the veneration of the world, and the love and confidence of the good.

The following canon of the church of England, published, I think, in the time of King James, shows how

much was thought of a peculiar dress, *for the very purpose of recommending the Bishops and the inferior clergy to popular favor.* The canon is as follows.

“The true, ancient and flourishing churches of Christ, being ever desirous that their Prelacy and clergy might be had as well in *outward reverence*, as otherwise regarded for the worthiness of their ministry, did think it fit, by a prescript form of decent and comely apparel, to have them *known to the people, and thereby to receive the honor—due to the ministers of Almighty God*; we therefore, following their grave judgment, and the ancient custom of the church of England, and hoping that in time newfangledness of apparel will die of itself, do appoint, that the Archbishops and Bishops shall not intermit to use the accustomed apparel of their degrees.”—That apparel had been exactly prescribed before. The canon then proceeds to direct that all Deans, Archdeacons, Prebendaries, and Doctors of Divinity shall wear gowns with such particular collars and sleeves, together with hoods or tippetts, and square caps. The same canon also prescribes the cloaks which the inferior ecclesiastics shall wear on their journies, the dress they shall use in private houses, and even the caps they shall wear in the night.

On this canon I have two remarks to make. First. If ecclesiastical Rulers undertake to regulate the dress of ministers, whether of the higher or lower order, by a minute and exact legislation, how undignified and frivolous their enactments are likely to be! Second. If ministers possess the requisite qualifications, they will of course carefully conform to decent custom, and will use the dress, which is generally esteemed most suitable



for men in their condition. And who can doubt that it is perfectly safe to leave the matter to be regulated in this way? Well qualified ministers of the gospel will always appear in a becoming dress. It will not, however, be their *dress*, but the worthiness of their character and the sacredness of their office, which will procure for them the high esteem and love of the people. Should any minister neglect to wear a decent and honorable apparel,—for example, should he appear in the pulpit with a white coat, white gown, or a red jacket, he would prove himself essentially wanting in the decorum of the ministerial character, and ought most surely to be dealt with as an offender.

But these remarks on ministerial dress may have been carried too far; and in reference to the whole subject I may be reminded of the adage, *de gustibus non disputandum est*,—there is no arguing about matters of *taste*. So be it. I will freely concede to others, what I claim for myself,—not only the rights of *conscience*, but the rights of *taste*. And I will close with saying, that *my* taste, which has been formed on the model of my Puritan ancestors, and of the New Testament Scriptures, is decidedly in favor of a plain, simple apparel for ministers, and plain, simple rites and forms in religious worship.



## LECTURE VII.

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In this Lecture, I shall state my last objection to the Episcopal scheme. But it is an objection to that scheme, *as held by the High church party*. In what constitutes the substance of my objection, I shall therefore have the satisfaction of going in company with a great part of the Episcopal denomination, both in this country, and in England. Several distinguished Episcopalians who have rejected the peculiarities of High church men, have been mentioned in previous Lectures. I have no means of judging on which side the majority is found,—though it is said to be, especially among laymen, in opposition to High Churchism. I hope it will be found to be so among the clergy also. For it is my deliberate conviction, that the exclusive principle held by the High church party, is more repugnant to the spirit of Christianity, and more odious in the sight of God, than all the other errors which can be imputed to the Episcopal branch of the Christian Church. And unless my conceptions of God, and Christ, and the kingdom of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit, and the progress of religion, are all wrong, and totally wrong; the time is at hand,—(the Lord hasten it!)—when the High church principles,—not those who maintain them,—shall be swept away; and shall be remembered,—as the worst things in the

history of the church are now remembered,—with astonishment and shame. And as there are some parts of the Book of Common Prayer, which seem to give too much support to the principles, against which I so strongly object; I cannot but hope that the parts referred to will be subjected to a thorough revision.

I have already said, that there are many Episcopalians of the highest reputation, who utterly reject the principles held by the High church party; and who regard it as totally unscriptural, and some of them say “utterly foolish,” to claim any exclusive divine right for Episcopal ordination, or to refuse to acknowledge other communions as churches of Christ. Goode, speaking of ordination by Bishops alone, as successors of the Apostles, says; “I admit that there is not any Scripture proof for it.” And he adds;—“as the proof is not to be found in Scripture, so antiquity is divided with respect to it. And moreover,—though it is the doctrine of our church, yet it is held by her with an allowance for those who may differ from her on the point, and not as if the observance of it was requisite by divine command, and essential to the validity of all ordinations;—though, for the preservation of the full *ecclesiastical* regularity of her own orders, she has made it *essential to the ministers of her own communion*.” If Episcopalians at large would adopt this candid and rational principle, and act upon it, my strongest objection against their ecclesiastical system would vanish at once.

In order to do full justice to those who reject the High church scheme, I make a quotation from another excellent writer, a distinguished layman of the church of England, to whose views many distinguished laymen



of the Episcopal church in America will give their cordial assent. "I am aware," he says, "that in St. Jerome's time, there existed generally, though by no means universally, this difference between the Bishop and the Presbyters, viz., that to the former was *then* confided the power of ordination. The transition from perfect equality to absolute superiority was not suddenly effected;—it was the growth of time; not of years, but of centuries." He says, that "Episcopacy, in the modern acceptation of the term, did not exist in the time of the Apostles; and that, however expedient—such an institution might be, it cannot plead the sanction of Apostolic appointment or example."—"Thus much at least," he says, "is certain, namely, that the government of each church, *including the ordination of ministers*, was at first in the hands of the Presbytery;—that when one of that body was raised to the office of President, and on whom the title of Bishop was conferred, it was simply by the election of the other Presbyters, whose appointment was final, requiring no confirmation or consecration at the hands of any other Prelates." He adds: "If then all this be so, there seems to be an end to the question; for under whatever circumstances the privilege of ordaining was afterwards committed to the Bishop, he could of necessity receive no more than it was in their power to bestow, from whom he received it, who were co-ordinate Presbyters, not superiors. At whatever period, therefore, it was adopted, and with whatever uniformity it might be continued, and whatever value or even authority it might hence acquire; still, as an Apostolic institution it has none: there is a gap which can never be filled; or rather, the link by which the whole must be sus-

pended is wanting, and can never be supplied. There can be no Apostolical succession of that which had no Apostolical existence."

As it is such a pleasure to dwell upon these honest and honorable principles of Episcopalians, I shall add to the above a passage from Bishop Hoadley. Speaking of the Exclusive claims of High churchmen, that excellent Prelate says: "I do not love, I confess, so much as to repeat the principal branches of their beloved scheme; they are so different — from the voice of the gospel. When they would *claim* you," (that is, seek to obtain you,)—"as *their fellow-laborers the Papists do*,—by telling you, that you cannot hope for the favor of God, but in the strictest communion with their church, — that God hath himself hung your salvation upon this nicety; that he dispenses none of his favors or graces, but by the hands of them," (i. e. Bishops,) "and their subordinate priests; that you cannot be authoritatively blessed or released from your sins, but by them who are the regular priests; that churches under other Bishops, (i. e. other than in regular succession,) are schismatical conventicles, made up of excommunicated persons, both clergy and laity,—out of God's church, as well as out of his favor;—I say, when such arguments as these are urged, you need only to have recourse to a general answer to this whole heap of scandal and defamation upon the will of God, the gospel of Christ, and the church of England in particular;—that you have not so learned Christ, or the design of his gospel, or even the foundation of this particular part of his church, reformed and established in England. The following arguments will justify you, which ought therefore to be frequently in

the thoughts of all who have any value for the most important points :—God is just, and equal, and good ; and as sure as he is, he cannot put the salvation of any man upon what he himself has put it out of the power of any man upon earth to be entirely satisfied in. *It hath not pleased God in his Providence, to keep up any proof of the least probability, or moral possibility of a regular, uninterrupted succession."*

The views of such writers, so directly opposed to the High church claims, are, I think, fully sustained by Scripture, and by ecclesiastical history, and well agree with the enlarged spirit of Christian candor and charity. They have the evident stamp of truth and love. But the High church principle cannot be plainly stated, without being seen at once to be repugnant to the genius of the Christian religion. And I do not wonder, that so much is done to divert attention from its unseemly qualities, and that such reluctance is generally shown to bring it out in all its length and breadth to public view. We allege that it *un-churches* all non-Episcopal denominations, and refuses to acknowledge those, who are out of the pale of the Episcopal church, as possessing the character of Christians, or as being the members of Christ's spiritual kingdom. The advocates of the High church principle try to evade this charge by saying, that they make allowance for those who are kept out of their church by *involuntary* and *unavoidable ignorance*. But *we* cannot, if we would, avail ourselves of this allowance. We have had the necessary means of information. We have read the Bible, and ecclesiastical history with reference to their claims. We have read their books. And the more we have read and thought, the more fully have

we been convinced, that their system has no solid foundation. Now my question is, how do they regard *us*? —I mean, the non-Episcopal churches and ministers of this country. How do they regard us, who are Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists, taken just as we are? Do they acknowledge the churches of these denominations to be true churches of Christ, and their ministers to be true ministers of Christ? Do they believe that these non-Episcopal ministers have a right to preach, and the promise of a divine blessing to attend their preaching; and that the ordinances administered by them are valid? If they do, they renounce their High church principle. But the claims they assert, and the arguments they use in support of those claims, all show, that they do not mean to acknowledge us as making any part of the true ministry or church of Christ. Here their system comes out to view in all its narrowness and enormity!—*a small part of American Christians, and a small part of Protestant Christians, set themselves up to be the only true church of Christ, and their ministers as the only ministers of Christ, and the ordinances administered by them, as the only valid ordinances; when it is known in heaven and earth, that those whom they thus disown, are as manifestly owned of God, and have as much evidence of God's gracious presence and approbation, and as many fruits of his Spirit, as they themselves!*

It would certainly be natural to expect, that such high and exclusive claims as those above mentioned, would be found to rest on the basis of clear, unquestionable evidence. But what evidence can the advocates of these claims produce? I ask for one passage in the New Tes-



tament which plainly teaches or implies, that no man, whatever his qualifications, and whatever else he may do, can be a true minister of Christ, without being ordained by a Prelatical Bishop. I ask for evidence,—for one iota of evidence from Scripture, that a Bishop is anything above a Presbyter, or a Presbyter anything below a Bishop; or that one whom Episcopalians call a Bishop, has a whit more authority to ordain, than any other gospel minister; or that he can, by the imposition of hands, impart any more ministerial authority or virtue, or that those who are ordained by him are, in truth, and in the sight of God, more truly or more completely invested with the sacred office, than those who are ordained by others. Nay, I hold that *our* ecclesiastical order is far more conformed to the pattern of the Apostles and their immediate successors, than the Episcopal order. The evidence of this from Ecclesiastical History is, in my view, so clear and conclusive, that it cannot much longer be called in question by any man, who has the reputation of learning and candor. To say the least, the evidence against the existence of Prelacy in the first Christian churches is so various and powerful, that it may well lead all Prelates, as it does some of them, to assert their authority, not with an air of self-complacent superiority, but with gentleness, humility and candor. Not a few of them, however, being fully possessed with the idea of their Apostolic authority, confidently affirm, that they have the sole right to ordain, and that those ministers, who are not ordained by a Prelate, are not ordained at all, and of course are not gospel ministers, and have no right to preach, or to administer the sacraments, or to do any part of the ministerial work; and that, if

they undertake the work, they have no prospect of being acceptable to God, or profitable to men.—I might remind High churchmen, that this assumption of theirs is not founded, more or less, on the teachings of Christ and his Apostles, or of those who were the immediate successors of the Apostles. I might remind them, that their exclusive claim rests not upon divine inspiration, but upon human tradition;—not upon the more ancient authority,—the infallible word of God, or the practice of the churches the first half century after the Apostles,—but upon the less ancient authority,—the authority of fallible men in the third and fourth centuries.—I might remind them of the representation of such an author as Mosheim, namely, that in the infancy of the Councils in the third century, “the Bishops did not scruple to acknowledge, that they appeared there merely as the ministers or legates of their respective churches; and that they were in fact nothing more than representatives acting under instructions; but that it was not long before this humble language began, by little and little, to be exchanged for a loftier tone; and that they, at length, took it upon them to assert, that they were the legitimate successors of the Apostles themselves, and might, consequently, by their own proper authority, dictate to the Christian flock.”—I might also remind them of the origin of the high Episcopal pretensions in the church of England; that they were unknown for a long time after the establishment of that church; and that they originated about the time when the Puritans settled in this country. Hallam, in his *Constitutional History of England*,—which Macaulay speaks of as the most impartial book he ever read,—says: “Laud and his party began, about

the end of Elizabeth's reign, by preaching the divine right, as it is called, or absolute indispensability of Episcopacy; *a doctrine, of which the first traces, as I apprehend, are found about the end of Elizabeth's reign.* They insisted on the necessity of Episcopal succession, regularly derived from the Apostles. They drew an inference from this tenet, that ordinations by Presbyters were, in all cases, null." They began now to speak of Lutherans and Calvinists, "as aliens, to whom they were not at all related, and as schismatics, with whom they held no communion; nay, as wanting the very essence of Christian society. This again brought them nearer, by irresistible consequence, to the disciples of Rome."— I might also refer to the more recent representation of Neander, whose learning, impartiality, and sound judgment are too well known to need any recommendation from me. He thinks that, in the ordinary course of events in the Primitive church, a distinction among Christian ministers, who were originally of the same rank, was introduced, and that one of them gradually obtained præminence over his colleagues; and by reason of that peculiar oversight which he exercised over the whole community, was designated by the name Bishop, which was at first applied to all Presbyters indiscriminately. He says, however, there is no evidence that any Apostle introduced this change; much less that he authorized it as a perpetual ordinance. But he candidly allows, that such a change in the mode of administering the government of the church, resulting from peculiar circumstances, may have been introduced as a salutary expedient, without implying any departure from the purity of the Christian spirit. But he says: "When

the doctrine is,—that Bishops are, by divine right, the head of the church, and invested with the government of the same ;—that they are the successors of the Apostles, and by this succession exercise apostolical authority ; that they are the medium through which, in consequence of that ordination which they have received merely in an outward manner, the Holy Ghost, in all time to come, must be transmitted to the church ;—when this doctrine, which gradually gained currency in the third century, becomes the doctrine of the church, we certainly must perceive, in these assumptions, a strong corruption of the purity of the Christian system. It is a carnal perversion of the true idea of the Christian church. It is falling back into the spirit of the Jewish religion. Instead of the Christian idea of a church, based on inward principles of communion, and extending itself by means of these, it presents us with the image of one,—resting in outward ordinances, and, by external rites, seeking to promote the kingdom of God. This entire perversion of the original views of the Christian church was itself the origin of the whole system of the Roman Catholic religion,—the germ, from which sprung the popery of the dark ages.”

This eminent writer would have “ no controversy with that class of Episcopalians who adhere to the Episcopal system, as well adapted, in their opinion, to the exigencies of their church.” He says ; “ We would live in harmony with them, notwithstanding their mistaken views of the true form of the church, provided they do not denounce other systems of church government. But the doctrine of the absolute necessity of the Episcopal as the only valid form of government, and of the Episco-



pal succession of Bishops above mentioned, in order to a participation of the gifts of the Spirit,—all this we must regard as something foreign to the true idea of the Christian church. It is in direct conflict with the spirit of Protestantism; and is the origin, not of the true Catholicism of the Apostles, but of that of the Romish church. When therefore Episcopalians disown, as essentially deficient in their ecclesiastical organization, other Protestant churches, which evidently have the spirit of Christ; it only remains for us to protest, in the strongest terms, against their setting up such a standard—for the Christian church. Far be it from us, who began with Luther in the spirit, that we should now desire to be made perfect by the flesh.”\*

Such testimonies and arguments as I have now presented, in connection with those given in previous Lectures, against the High church assumptions, and coming, as they do, from Episcopalians and others of such reputation, must, I think, have weight in the public mind. I hope they will have some weight with Episcopalians, even with those who hold the High church principles. But I have been too conversant with the human mind and human affairs, to indulge any sanguine expectation, that differences of opinion on such subjects will, generally, be either removed or diminished by the influence of controversy. Unhappily, it is often found to be the effect of controversy, that the parties engaged in it, are carried still further apart from each other. It would be very painful to me, if it should prove to be so in the present case. For how earnestly soever I may desire to

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\* Neander's Introduction to Coleman's Primitive Church.

convince Episcopalians of what I regard as faults in their scheme ; I am still more desirous that mutual prejudices may be done away, and that ministers and churches of different names, who truly believe the doctrines and obey the precepts of the gospel, may receive one another in love, as they have all, and equally, been received by Christ, their common Lord and Saviour. All real Christians ought to be so mindful of the debt of gratitude which they owe to him who loved them and died for them, and who called them with a holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace,—they ought to be so delighted with their happy relation to the Redeemer and Head of the church, and with that eternal inheritance which they will all in a few days enjoy together in heaven,—and they ought to be so occupied with the momentous work of honoring Christ, and preparing themselves and others for his coming and kingdom, that all differences in mere outward forms shall, in their view, sink into comparative insignificance. Their affection to Christ should be so strong, that they shall desire above all things to please him. And it must be perfectly clear to them, that they can do nothing more pleasing to him, than to love those whom he loves, and to receive those whom he has received, and especially to look with hearty complacency and joy upon all those who bear his image, and love his cause, and who are laboring faithfully, and with abundant evidence of his gracious presence and approbation, to preach his glorious gospel.

Instances are not wanting of that candid, fraternal affection and conduct, which should be found in Christians, towards those who differ from them as to outward

forms of worship and government. There are many praise-worthy examples of this among different denominations in this country. Congregationalists, Presbyterians of different classes, Baptists, and Methodists, however strong their predilections for their own peculiarities, and their objections to the peculiarities of each other, still maintain a kind, brotherly intercourse. Ministers of these several denominations recognize each other as true gospel ministers, frequently exchange ministerial labors, and even assist in each other's ordination. And all this they do, not in the way of time-serving, and not because they have the least disposition to give up anything which is a matter of conscience. Their motive is widely different. They do it, because they regard the great, essential things of Christianity as of paramount importance; because they love all who bear the image of Christ; and because they have some enlargedness of mind, and, in things which are not essential to the scheme of gospel truth, are willing to concede to others the same right of private judgment and the same liberty of action, as they claim for themselves. This spirit of Christian liberality and love has for the most part, and particularly in some very significant instances, been a conspicuous mark of the Puritans,—although the opposite qualities of uncharitableness and bigotry, have so often been imputed to them. I cannot but glory in the lovely and noble character they exhibited, or rather in the grace of Christ which was with them, when I call to mind their feelings and conduct in the remarkable case of which I am about to make mention. The Puritans in England, both ministers and private Christians, judged by the standard of Scripture or impartial reason, were a

noble race of men, indued with extraordinary intellectual and moral excellence. This character always has been and always will be awarded to them by discerning and candid men. From time to time they had suffered persecution in different ways, and in no small degree, from the civil and ecclesiastical power. But they suffered with meekness, and endeavoured to comply with the gospel precept, not to return evil for evil. In the year 1630, ten years after the first settlement of our forefathers in Massachusetts, a body of Puritan emigrants embarked for this new country on board the ship *Arbella*. On that occasion,—which was to them so deeply solemn and interesting,—they were elevated above all selfish and contracted feelings, and their hearts were wide open to sentiments of the tenderest affection and confidence towards all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and particularly towards their brethren of the church of England, from whom they had conscientiously dissented, and of whom they were now about to take a final leave. They were Dissenters and Puritans before they came to America, as much as they were after. But they were **CHRISTIANS**; and they recognized Christians in the church from which they had honestly separated, and loved them with pure hearts fervently. Before sailing, they addressed a letter to them,—a letter which breathes a spirit worthy to be praised,—as it has been by Episcopalians as well as others,—and not only to be praised, but to be *imitated*. They address themselves with great respect and affection to their fathers and brethren of the church of England, and express a strong desire to procure “the prayers and blessings of the Lord’s faithful servants.” “For which end,” they say, “we—have



recourse unto you, as those whom God hath placed nearest his throne of mercy ;—we beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of the Lord Jesus, to consider us as your brethren, standing in very great need of your help, and earnestly imploring it. And howsoever your charity may have met with some occasion of discouragement through the misreport of our intentions, or through the disaffection, or indiscretion of some of us, or rather amongst us : for we are not of those who dream of perfection in this world ; yet we desire you would be pleased to take notice of the Principals and body of our company, as those who esteem it our honor to call the church of England, from whence we rise, our dear mother, and cannot part from our native country where she specially resideth, without much sadness in our hearts, and many tears,—ever remembering that such hope and part as we have obtained in the common salvation, we have received in her bosom, and sucked from her breasts ; we leave it not therefore, loathing the milk wherewith we were nourished there ; but, blessing God for the parentage and education, as members of the same body, shall always rejoice in her good, and unfeignedly grieve for any sorrow that shall ever betide her, and while we have breath, sincerely desire and endeavour the continuance and abundance of her welfare, with the enlargement of her bounds in the kingdom of Christ Jesus.”

“ Be pleased therefore, Reverend fathers and brethren, to help forward this work now in hand.—It is an usual and laudable exercise of your charity, to recommend to the prayers of your congregations, the necessities and straits of your private neighbours. Do the like for a church springing out of your own bowels. We

conceive much hope, that this remembrance of us, if it be frequent and fervent, will be a most prosperous gale in our sails, and provide such a passage and welcome for us from the God of the whole earth, as both we who shall find it, and yourselves with the rest of our friends, who shall hear of it, shall be much enlarged to bring in such daily returns of thanksgiving, as the specialties of his Providence — may justly challenge at all our hands. You are not ignorant, that the Spirit of God stirred up the Apostle Paul to make continual mention of the church of Philippi, which was a colony of Rome. Let the same Spirit, we beseech you, put you in mind, — to pray for us without ceasing, who are a weak colony from yourselves, making continual request for us to God in all your prayers.”

“ If any there be, who through want of clear intelligence of our course, or tenderness of affection towards us, cannot conceive so well of our way as we could desire ; we would intreat such not to despise us, nor to desert us in their prayers, — but to consider rather, that they are so much the more bound to express the bowels of their compassion toward us, remembering always, that both nature and grace doth bind us to relieve and rescue, with our utmost — power, such as are dear unto us, when we conceive them to be running uncomfortable hazards.”

“ What goodness you shall extend to us in this or any other Christian kindness, we, your brethren in Christ Jesus, shall labor to repay in what duty we are or shall be able to perform, promising, so far as God shall enable us, to give him no rest on your behalf, — — when we shall be in our poor cottages in the wilderness. — —

And so commending you to the grace of God in Christ, we shall ever rest, Your assured friends and brethren."

This letter was subscribed by *Jo. Winthrop*, Gov., *Rich. Saltonstall*, and others, and was dated, Yarmouth, aboard the *Arbella*, April 7, 1630.

I have referred so particularly to this instance of elevated Christian feeling and conduct, as highly creditable to those Puritan emigrants, and as what I hope may be profitable to others. I am confident that a letter, so respectful and affectionate as this, must have produced a powerful effect, and that many ministers and laymen in the church of England must have heartily responded to the sentiments of sincere love and piety, which were so meekly and tenderly addressed to them. Those pious Puritans, enlisted in such a great and perilous enterprise, and then about to leave their native country, passed over all matters of minor consequence, and looked upon the church of England as a branch of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, and acknowledged all Christians who belonged to it, as brethren. Who can doubt, that the worthy and the good in that church were actuated by a similar spirit of affection and candor, and that they regarded those Puritans with true brotherly love, and offered up many fervent and effectual prayers to God in their behalf?

Some Episcopalians are fond of quoting the above-mentioned letter, for the purpose of showing how high a place *their* church formerly had in the esteem even of Puritans. This is all well. But ought they to stop here? If the Puritans did what was proper in writing such a letter, it ought to be mentioned to *their* honor, as well as to the honor of those to whom it was addressed. And if Episcopalians consider the sentiments of humility

and brotherly kindness and charity, which pervade the letter, to be scriptural and just, they ought to be in harmony with them, and to reciprocate them. If it is right for Puritan ministers and Christians to esteem and love *Episcopalians as brethren*, it is right that they, in their turn, should be esteemed and loved *by Episcopalians* in the same way. If Episcopalians are disposed to receive honor from the fraternal affection of Puritans, let them take care, by the same fraternal affection, to honor the Puritans,—according to the golden rule,—“Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.”—It cannot be that Episcopalians should really think, as they do, that the views and feelings expressed in this remarkable document are worthy of their hearty commendation, without being aware that they are also worthy of their *imitation*.—And if all churchmen and all dissenters in Great Britain, and all Episcopalians and non-Episcopalians in America might be animated and governed by those pure, disinterested, Apostolic sentiments of the Puritans, which have now been mentioned with approbation; it would be an accomplishment, in a measure, of that prayer which Jesus offered up the same night in which he was betrayed: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that *they all may be one*; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.”



How insignificant do all outward forms, ceremonial observances, party names, and worldly interests appear, when we turn our thoughts to that cordial love and union among *all true believers*, by which this prayer of our blessed Saviour would be fulfilled! Let the followers of Christ, however distinguished by different names, and by dwelling in different places, concur, in their feelings and words and actions, with the holy intercessions of him who died for them; and then the world shall see what Christianity is, and be constrained to repeat the saying—*Behold, how these Christians love one another!* What is the zeal and arguing and strife of men in favor of their own party—what is it all worth, compared with a good like this!

I have referred to a small company of Puritans, as men who breathed the spirit of the gospel, and cherished a fraternal affection towards all who loved the Lord Jesus. And I have the pleasure to say, that much of the same spirit has prevailed and now prevails among the different classes of non-Episcopal ministers and Christians in this country; and would prevail still more extensively, were it not constantly annoyed and chilled by the narrow exclusiveness and haughty bigotry of High churchmen. So far as my knowledge extends, Congregational ministers in New England are disposed to maintain a free Christian and ministerial intercourse with Episcopal ministers. They do indeed sustain their own denomination, as a branch of the Christian church; but not to the exclusion of other branches. Neither their pulpits, nor their churches, nor their institutions, nor their hearts, are exclusive. They adhere zealously to Congregationalism; but they indignantly reject the

idea, that other denominations of evangelical Christians do not belong to the true church, and do not enjoy the presence and favor of the Head of the church, as really as themselves. And they are at all times ready, by their prayers and their labors, to promote the success of the gospel among those who adopt different modes of church order. And I believe that a similar spirit of brotherly kindness prevails, in a good degree, among the principal denominations of evangelical Christians in America.

Bishop De Lancey, in the sermon before mentioned, speaks of the “ wide-spreading bodies of Christians” in Massachusetts, “ who look with hostility or apathy upon” Episcopalians. Now why does he say this? I consider this Seminary to be the child of *Congregationalism*, which has always been the predominant form of religion in this State. The Seminary was founded by Congregationalists; and its affairs have been administered in accordance with the general principles and feelings of Congregationalists. And all the manifestation which has here been made of either “ hostility or apathy” towards Episcopalians, has been this,—that we have received a large number of young men, who have been and have been known to be Episcopalians,—we have received just as large a number of them as have been pleased to come here, and have granted them all the common privileges of the Institution, and have exercised towards them, as they will testify, the same friendship as to any others, and if they have desired it, as many of them have,—we have aided them in preparing for the Episcopal church by our charity funds. This has been the course we have uniformly pursued, with the concurrence of all concerned in the government of the Institu-

tion, from the beginning to the present time. Nor is there to be any change in this respect. I do not mention this treatment of those who have been training up for the ministry and the missionary service in the Episcopal church, as a matter of boasting, or as conferring any particular obligation on Episcopalians. We have done it from a desire to advance the common welfare of the true church of Christ, by introducing into every branch of it, learned, pious, and faithful ministers. I refer to this fact, with which I happen to be familiar, and I might refer to many other facts, to show, that Congregationalism, though always ready to protest against whatever taint of Romanism remains among Episcopalians, feels neither "hostility" nor "apathy," but hearty good will towards them, *as one of the branches of the Christian Church*, and is always happy to join in the noble and successful efforts which they are making, both here and in Great Britain, to promote the true interest of Christ's kingdom.

And now, as I have taken pains to show, that non-Episcopal Christians, particularly the Puritans, possess, in some good measure, though still far less than they ought, the spirit of forbearance and active, brotherly kindness towards Christians belonging to the Episcopal church; I shall adduce one particular instance, in addition to the many instances which have been alluded to, of *the right spirit* among *Episcopalians*,—that is, the spirit of sincere brotherly love and confidence towards Christians of other denominations. And I shall adduce this instance, because it is recent, and because our religious community has been deeply impressed with it. I refer to the case of Mar Yohannan, the Nestorian Bish-

op. The Reverend Prelate of the Diocese of Western New York, in the sermon which I have repeatedly mentioned, makes a very particular reference to the remarks of Mar Yohannan, to prove, what no intelligent person has doubted, that the Nestorians are Episcopalians in their mode of worship and Church government; that they have three sacred orders, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, though nine degrees of clergy; that the Bishops ordain, that they have Prayer Books, etc. All this is plain. Now if it is proper to refer to Mar Yohannan to show that he and his Nestorian brethren hold to the Episcopal scheme of church order, it is equally proper to refer to him to show, that they, in common with many English and American Episcopalians, hold to it without bigotry, and in the exercise of fervent brotherly affection towards Christians of other denominations. Mar Yohannan and his brethren from the first welcomed the arrival of our Missionaries, and gladly opened their houses and their churches to them as ministers of Christ, who were sent there, not to dispute about rites and ceremonies and forms of worship, but to preach Christ crucified. And there, in that distant region, among those poor and oppressed Nestorians, you behold an example of mutual love and confidence and Christian coöperation between Episcopalians and non-Episcopalians, upon which the God of all grace, the Father of all believers, has looked with special favor. The whole affair is fully set forth in the excellent publication of the Rev. Justin Perkins, D. D. But because Mar Yohannan, while on a visit to this country, manifested a special attachment to the worthy missionary under whose protection he had been placed, and ardent love and gratitude to those min-



isters and Christians who had done so much for the spiritual good of his afflicted people, he was compelled to witness a striking development of that unchristian exclusiveness, against which I have given and must still give my most earnest protestation. In the Churchman, an Episcopal paper of New York, the High-church Episcopalians made a direct attack upon the Nestorian Bishop, calling in question his title to the office of a Prelate and the orthodoxy of his people, and then signifying that he ought to be censured, and excluded from their communion, because he had kept company and prayed with other denominations of Christians, and had suffered and encouraged Missionaries of the American Board to officiate as clergymen among the Nestorians.

Now there is nothing which excites, in the minds of men in general, feelings of stronger disapprobation and abhorrence, than unprovoked and wanton injury committed against a meek, inoffensive, and kind-hearted man. But the good Bishop answers for himself. And the whole of his answer, as translated by Mr. Perkins, may be seen in the volume referred to, called "*A RESIDENCE OF EIGHT YEARS IN PERSIA.*" I shall quote only a part. He writes thus.

"My brethren of the Episcopalians :

What evil or wicked thing have I wrought in relation to you, that some of you should write about me in your Newspapers, and scatter them through all America? I am a poor man, and my nation is poor. I came to thank Christians in this country for having helped us, and to ask them to help us more, for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are members one of another.—

Well; if you had desired our good, would you not sometimes have inquired of me thus: what is the condition of your people in that land of heathens? Is there a church there? Are there good men? Are there tokens of the influence of the Holy Spirit? What is the state of knowledge and instruction? What are the morals? But from very few of you have I heard one of these questions. You ask, *how many orders have you?* My friends, *forms* are nothing. "Neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."—Shall we place our confidence in name, or forms? No; but in the Lamb of God, who descended from his throne on high to save that which was lost. Observe and behold. The Creator of the heights and the depths did not demean himself so loftily as some denominations, who say, **WE ARE**; *there is no other true church.*—Your church came out from the church of the Pope. Is there not some leaven of the Pope still remaining in many of you?—What are those *pictures* in some of your churches? This is a mark of the Pope.—Mark that second commandment,—Thou shalt not make unto thee any likeness of anything in heaven above, nor in the earth beneath, nor in the waters under the earth. Another commandment of God is, Love your neighbours as yourselves.—But you say, **OUR CHURCH IS GREAT.** Very well. Your church has become great, has it? Why? That it may despise small churches? Our Lord—says, whoever will be greatest, let him be *servant* of all. This haughtiness is another mark of the *Pope*, who teaches that none will be saved who are out of his church.—Come let us see; has our Lord pronounced blessings on the *proud*, or on the *meek*?—I do not say

your way [church polity] is not a good one,—very good, if you properly follow it; not in exclusiveness and ostentation, saying we are *the only true church*; nor in hypocrisy.—I love Episcopalians, and Congregationalists, and Presbyterians, and Dutchmen, and Lutherans, and Methodists, and Baptists,—all, *as brethren in Christ*.—We open our churches to their Priests, and receive them as the Priests of God.—Our Lord said—whosoever receiveth a Prophet in the name of a Prophet, shall receive a Prophet's reward.—Thus have we learned from our Lord.

You are displeased with me, are you, because I have associated with the Presbyterians and Congregationalists?—I do not practise partiality. Is it very strange, that I associate most with Presbyterians and Congregationalists? No. They are equally our brethren; and they have come and helped us in books and teachers, and have done a great and good work for our nation. Ought I to abandon them?—It would be a black reproach and a great sin for us thus to abuse the good they have done for us. God would be displeased with us for such—ingratitude. But we will never be unmindful of their beneficence.—Shall we abuse the good work which they have done for us? Never. We must obey God rather than man.—We all have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is over all and in all; over us, over you, and over them, and will judge us all at the last day; and if found at his right hand, will raise us all to the same heaven. We shall dwell in *peace together there*. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the

love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all forever. Amen.

Your — unworthy Christian brother,

MAR YOHANNAN."

*November, 1842.*

I have thus given "line upon line," because I wish to promote love and harmony among all who are the followers of Jesus, and to make the impression deep and permanent, that if we look with disdain upon any true and faithful ministers of the gospel, or if we denounce or disown them, "because they follow not with us;" He who searcheth the heart, will say to us, "ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."

And now, before leaving this point, let me say, although the evil against which I have urged my last and my strongest objection, is of such a nature, and has so tenacious a hold upon the mind and heart, that it is not at all likely to be cured by human arguments or persuasions,—it can be cured by the influence of the divine Spirit, and the events of the divine administration. Let the Spirit of God visit one of our cities, where there are Episcopal ministers holding the High church principle, and evangelical ministers of other denominations, with their respective churches. Let the Bishop and his clergy, and the other ministers of the gospel be brought to feel and act as the Apostle Paul did at Ephesus, and elsewhere, who "served the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears," earnestly desiring the conversion of sinners and the enlargement of Christ's spiritual kingdom, "warning every one day and night with tears," and "determined to know nothing save Jesus



Christ and him crucified ;” or rather, let them harmonize in their affections and desires with the Blessed Redeemer, who came to save that which was lost, and whose love for the souls of sinners was so great, that he died for their salvation, and who now reigns over all for the good of his people; let them go forth to their sacred work from day to day with this state of mind, declaring all the counsel of God, and yet feeling that “neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, but God who giveth the increase,” and offering up fervent prayer that the Holy Spirit may be sent down from heaven to give success to their labors; and let them find, that the worldly, the profane, the thoughtless, the fashionable and gay, the ambitious, the impure, the neglecters of public worship, the open enemies of godliness, are convinced of sin, and disposed to inquire what they shall do to be saved; and, in due time, let them see, that multitudes have experienced that work of God in the soul, which is so unspeakably precious and glorious,—“*the renewing of the Holy Ghost* ;” that, like the Corinthian believers, they “are washed and justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of their God ;” that they repent and believe; that they put away all malice and guile, and envy, and evil speaking, and every form of sin; that they love one another with pure hearts fervently; that they abound in the fruits of the Spirit, and are striving to be “complete in all the will of God ;”—let the Bishop and his clergy survey their own churches, and the churches of other ministers, and witness the evidences and results of this happy work, and see, with their own eyes, and with glad hearts, how far, in the state of individuals and families,

and in the whole condition of society, "old things are done away, and all things become new;" and let it be manifest to them, that this blessed transformation of thousands and thousands, of different ages and conditions, and among the different denominations, has been effected, not by the influence of any exciting human machinery, but by the power of plain, simple gospel truth, and love, and importunate prayer, on man's part, and by an effectual, renovating, all-subduing energy on God's part; and let it be perfectly manifest to them, that HE, to whom the kingdom belongs, has given to other ministers the same indubitable tokens of his gracious presence, approbation and blessing, as to themselves; and let their own hearts all the while be filled with the Spirit of holiness, and with the blessedness of communion with their merciful God and Saviour;—let all this take place; and, if I mistake not, the claim of exclusive rights and privileges, and exclusive authority, would pass away into the land of forgetfulness, and the Bishop and his clergy would feel as Peter did, after he had been instructed by a vision not to call that common or unclean which God had cleansed; and looking upon the ministers and churches of other names around them, thus visited with the Holy Spirit, would yield their prejudices, as Peter did his, to divine teaching, and would say with him;—*Forasmuch as God hath given them the like gift as unto us, what are we, that we should withstand God?* Such a work of God's Spirit would lift them up above the low, dark, unhealthy atmosphere where error dwells. And in that higher state of illumination and spirituality, where they would see things as they are, they would quickly find themselves released from

the evil principle inherent in their system of exclusiveness, and the arguments which they had been accustomed to urge in its favor, would weigh nothing, being evidently built upon false conceptions of the nature and objects of the reign of Christ.

But if there should be no such glorious dispensation of the Spirit in our day, and the evil which I have labored to expose, should for the present remain; it will not remain forever. A day is coming when every one who holds the sacred office, shall stand before Christ, not to *judge others*, but *to be judged*. It will be a heart-searching, all-revealing day; and, in the clear light which will then shine, who can tell how many discoveries will be made, and how many mistakes will be corrected? True gospel ministers who were never ordained by a Bishop, will be there,—and so many that no man can number them,—whom the Lord of all will acknowledge to have been *his ministers*, and to whom he will say, “well done, good and faithful servants; enter ye into the joy of your Lord.” Those who have set themselves up as the only true ministers of the gospel, will hear this approving sentence, and will learn at last, how great has been the difference between *their* judgment, and the judgment of CHRIST. There will be Episcopal ministers, more than can be numbered, whom the righteous Judge will also graciously own and reward, not because they were Episcopally ordained, but because they were “*good and faithful servants*.” And there will doubtless be a great multitude,—and no one knows how great that multitude will be,—who were introduced into the ministry by the authority of a Bishop, and in other ways, but were ungodly men and enemies to the cross of Christ, and to

whom the Judge will say,—*I never knew you, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.* This solemn and irreversible sentence upon good and faithful ministers, and upon those of a contrary character, will come from him who looketh not on the outward appearance, but on the heart, and who judgeth righteous judgment; and all his ministers and people will say, Amen.

I have now given free utterance to the convictions of my reason and conscience, and the feelings of my heart, respecting the exclusive principle of the High churchmen. This is a principle, however, which I cannot find in their Book of Common Prayer, nor in their Thirty Nine Articles, nor in their rules for ordaining ministers. It is a principle, which bears too obvious and striking a likeness to one of the first principles of the Papists, who acknowledge none to be ministers or Christians, except those who belong to their communion, — High churchmen themselves, in their turn, falling under the sentence of exclusion and condemnation from the Higher churchmen at Rome.

But before I close, I have a few words to say respecting the Episcopal scheme, understood in a more rational, mild, and charitable manner, as it is by so many worthy Episcopal ministers, who are called "*Low churchmen*,"—a very improper designation, I think, seeing they adopt principles far *higher and nobler* than the other party. Now I maintain that Episcopal ministers of what I call the more reasonable, charitable school, if they are truly upright and pious, and entertain Scriptural views of religion, must be subjected to some special inconveniences and difficulties. And my apprehension is, that,



if some young men, who are inclined to receive orders in the Episcopal church, would take pains beforehand, to get a just view of all that is implied in the contemplated transaction, they would start back from it, and by no means consent to put themselves under such unwelcome and revolting obligations. This was the case recently, as I am informed, of a young man of high promise in one of our cities. Just before the time fixed for his ordination, he had a free conversation with the Bishop, and from him he learned, that if he received orders, *he would not be allowed to have ministerial or ecclesiastical fellowship with any clergymen or churches of other denominations, or practically to acknowledge any one as authorized to preach and administer the sacraments, without Episcopal ordination.* The young man respectfully told the Bishop, that he could not proceed. And I am informed that he is far enough from repenting of his decision.

But the inconveniences and difficulties alluded to, become more apparent and formidable in relation to those, who enter the Episcopal church after having, for a considerable time, sustained the office of gospel ministers in other denominations. I shall explain my meaning by an example. And I can fix upon no one better adapted to my object, than the late EDWARD PAYSON. I will suppose then, that he is still alive, and that after he has been a Congregational minister for a quarter of a century, it becomes a serious inquiry with him, whether he shall change his denomination and be an Episcopal minister, —not however as a matter of conscience, but because he is aware of some defects in Congregationalism, and looks with peculiar satisfaction upon the more exact rules of

order in the Episcopal church. But Dr. Payson is not a man, that will take a step of such moment to himself and others, without much serious thought, and much prayer for divine direction. He sits down, therefore, deliberately to examine the matter, and to count the cost, and to satisfy himself what the Lord would have him to do. So far as appears from the Prayer Book, one of the first things to be done in order to his being admitted into the Episcopal church, is, to satisfy the Bishop, that *he can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and can also answer such questions as are contained in the Church Catechism*; and that, on this condition, he is to receive confirmation, just as a child does, and to be admitted to the Lord's Supper.—He finds too, that, if he takes orders in the Episcopal church, he will be held, though entirely contrary to his inclinations, to *act* on the exclusive principle. The Bishop will not admit him to preach and administer the ordinances on the ground of his previous ordination. Had he never been ordained, one great difficulty would be avoided. But although he verily believes that he has been called of God, and duly ordained, and has, for so many years, been authorized to fill the office of a gospel minister, he must, *by a public act*, renounce it all, and count it for nothing, and receive ordination, just as though he had never been ordained. He has preached the gospel and administered the Sacraments to thousands, very much to their edification, and with great enjoyment in his own soul. But he must now, *by a public act*, declare, that he has never had any warrant from God to minister in holy things, and that all he has done in the ministerial office, though fraught with such benefits to

multitudes, has been without validity. His labors have, in an unusual degree, been accompanied with the blessing of Almighty God, and he can look upon many hundred Christians, and a number of gospel ministers, who are the seals of his ministry, and will be his joy and crown at the appearing of Jesus Christ. But he must now, in the face of the world, engage in a transaction, which implies, and is understood to imply, that all his pious and successful labors have been performed without any just authority, and contrary to the will of his Lord and Master.—If he becomes an Episcopal minister, it will be his desire freely to indulge the kind fraternal affections of his own large heart towards those good men, who have been his fellow-laborers in the vineyard of Christ, and with whom he has so often united in improving conversation and in fervent prayer, and still to acknowledge them and walk with them as ministers of the gospel;—for they are not changed, except for the better; and his own heart is not changed towards them. But he will be compelled to resist all these lovely and hallowed inclinations of his own heart, and to sacrifice the heaven-born principle of unity and fellowship among the servants of Christ, and publicly to separate himself from those brethren, whom he has so sincerely esteemed and loved, and who have, with equal sincerity, esteemed and loved him;—and all this, not for any cause existing in them, or in him, nor out of regard to the mind of Christ, or to anything in the law or the gospel,—but merely because he has entered the Episcopal church, and placed himself under a Bishop.—He has assisted in setting apart many well qualified young men to the ministry by prayer and the laying on of hands, and has rejoiced to

see with what ability and diligence they have executed the office committed to them, and what tokens of divine favor have attended them. But the moment the hands of the Bishop are laid on him, he must in fact, though contrary to all the impulses of his heart, keep himself at a distance from all these servants of Christ; must disallow the validity of their ordinations, and must have no more ministerial intercourse with any of them,—although they are his beloved brethren and fellow-laborers as truly as before, and some of them his own spiritual children, for whom he “travailed in birth,” and whom he instructed and confirmed in the faith of the gospel, and whom he did, in connection with others, so solemnly and devoutly consecrate to their high and holy vocation. His heart will cleave to his brethren, and will desire to have fellowship with them, as in the happy days that are past, and will deplore the hard necessity which binds him to break asunder so many tender ties. But if he puts himself under the sway of Prelacy, he must submit to its dictates, and by an unwilling and constrained practice, must support its exclusive claims.—He has been accustomed, on all occasions, to offer up prayer to God in the sanctuary, with great freedom, according to the various promptings of his own fervent mind, and with the unction of the Holy Spirit. But how can such prayer, or the spiritual benefits of it continue, when he comes to be confined to forms, most of them written ages of ages ago, and is not permitted to express a thought or utter a word, except what is in the Book before him, or ever in any circumstances, to deviate from the same round of devotions. And how irksome must this perpetual confinement to written forms be to one who has so long



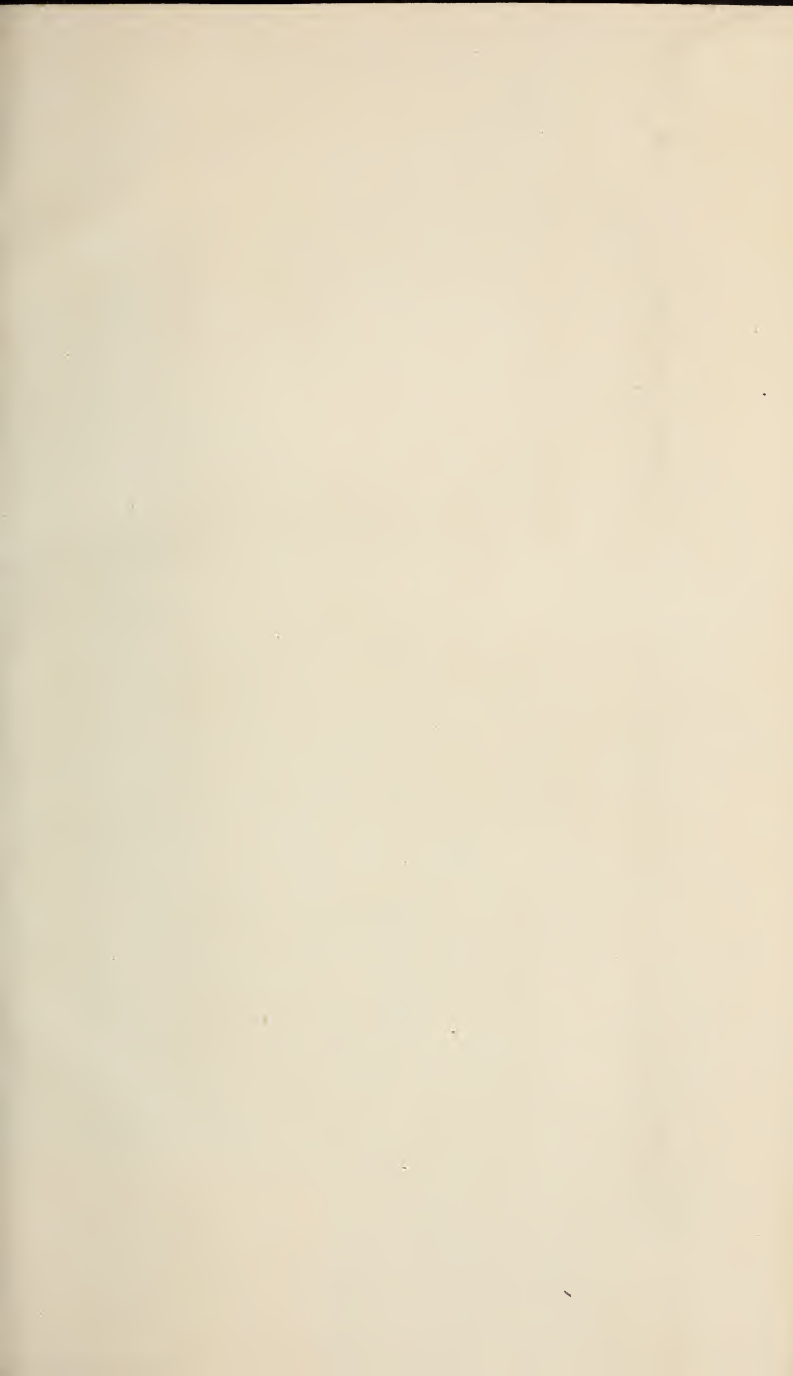
worshipped God, as the Apostles and Primitive Christians did, when the Spirit helped their infirmities, and taught them how to pray, and what to pray for!—But a still greater difficulty remains. For every time he administers Baptism to children, he must solemnly and expressly declare, *that God does then “regenerate them by his Holy Spirit, and receive them for his own children by adoption,”*—although he does not believe the sentiment he expresses, and while he utters it with his lips, must have an honest, but painful consciousness, that such a baptismal service is not right in the sight of God.

These are the leading circumstances of the case, which come before the mind of that good man. And they bring him to a pause. And in view of the whole matter, he says within himself;—*how can I think it to be the will of my Lord, whom I have so long served in the ministry, and before whom I must shortly stand, that I should take the step which I have been considering? Why should I give up all that has been scriptural, and pure, and precious in my own ministry, and practically disown all who remain in that condition, in which I have spent so many years with so much comfort? Whatever young men, who are less mindful of difficulties, may deem it proper to do; why should I, at this late period of my ministry and my life, break so many sacred bonds, and inflict so many wounds on myself and others, and voluntarily expose myself to so many dreaded difficulties and sacrifices? Why should I thrust myself into a place, where I shall be compelled, in some things, to act against the convictions of my conscience, and, in many things, against the best feelings of my heart?*

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I have now finished what I intended. Men of discernment will doubtless discover in these Lectures something wrong in the matter, or in the manner, or in both. And so far as they will make that wrong manifest, they will subserve the cause of truth. The controversy respecting Prelacy is doubtless to be continued,—but *not by me*. Whatever remains to be done in the way of research, explanation, and argument, must devolve upon those who are younger than I, and who possess higher qualifications, and are not so averse to controversy. A man who has lived three score years and ten, and who is called to fill an office so laborious and difficult, as mine, should remember how short his time is, and, instead of entangling himself with protracted disputes about the outward forms or any of the non-essentials of religion, should pursue steadily his great object, and give all diligence to finish the work which God has given him to do.

END.



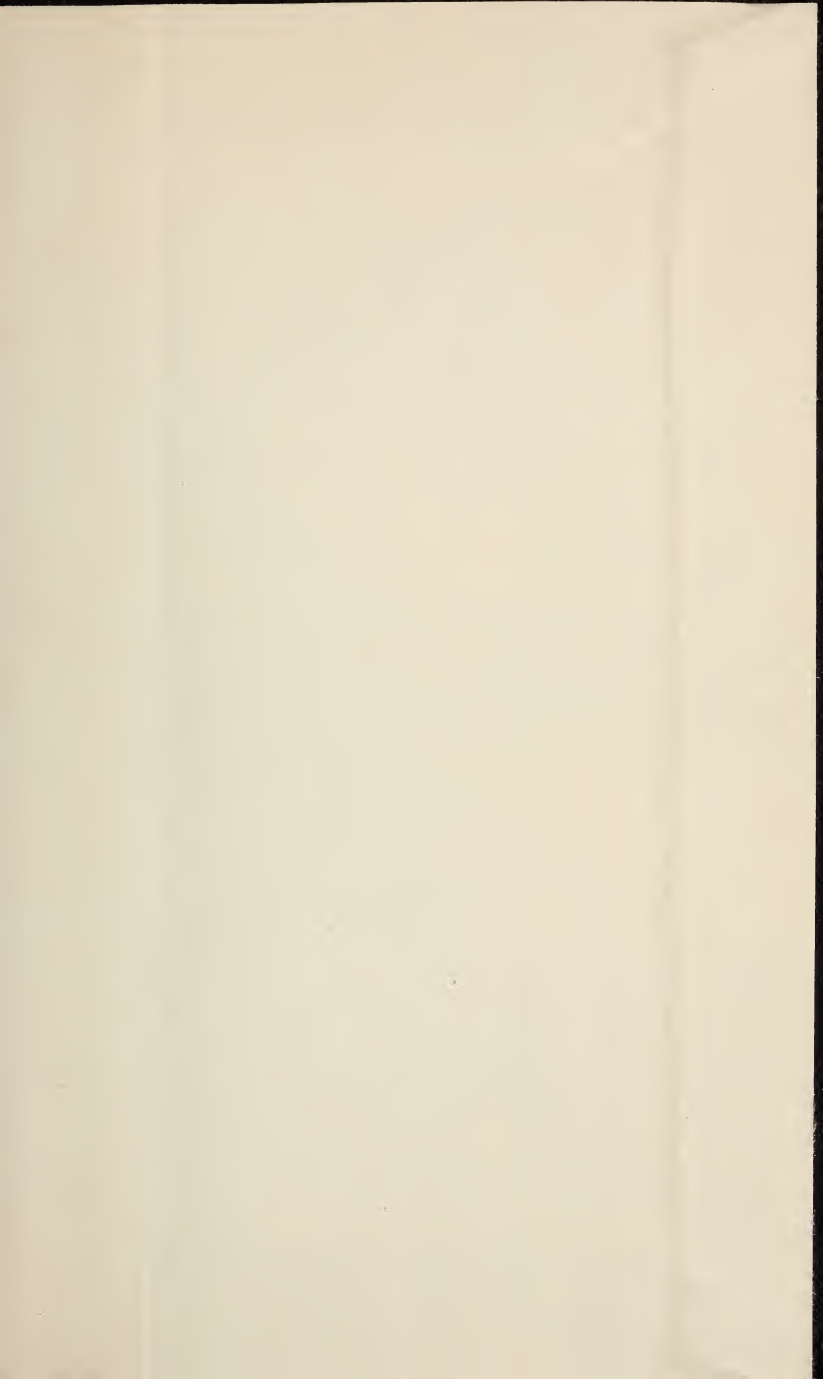
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